

Recognition Rates for Refugees in Scandinavia

What explains the difference?

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Abstract

Despite being bound by the same international conventions, different countries appear to have very different practices for assessing asylum applications. This empirical observation is the starting point for my thesis, which uses a statistical model to investigate the causes for discrepancies in recognition rates for refugees between the Scandinavian countries.

Norway, Denmark and Sweden are all bound by the Refugee Convention and have exactly the same national legislation for granting asylum seekers refugee status under this convention. However, the probability of gaining protection as a refugee for people who flee from the same country still vary greatly. This gap between the expected similarity of recognition rates and the reality of very different rates is puzzling. Few previous studies have attempted to explain it, possibly due to a lack of available data. To overcome this problem, I construct a new dataset of recognition rates for refugees in the three Scandinavian countries, covering all origin countries for the years 1995-2011. Using this dataset, I estimate a statistical model with the origin-specific recognition rate as the dependent variable.

I examine three possible causes for the discrepancy. First, by way of partisan theory, I hypothesise that recognition rates will vary according to the preferences of the voters of the governing parties and these parties' ideology. Second, I test for the option that anti-immigration parties in the three countries cause the other parties to resort to lower recognition rates in the face of voter flight. Third, I examine the possibility that the three Scandinavian countries emphasise conditions in the country of origin of the asylum seekers differently, which to my knowledge has not been investigated in previous studies. To this end, I construct a new index that measures the level of persecution and conflict in origin countries.

My findings point to an effect of politics on recognition rates. I find that recognition rates are lower under left-leaning governments than under centre-right governments in Scandinavia. At the same time, I find no effect of anti-immigration parties on recognition rates. In previous studies, Denmark has been singled out as the strictest Scandinavian country in terms of asylum policy, while Sweden has been considered the most liberal. I find evidence that it is relatively much more important to be from a country in turmoil when seeking asylum in Denmark, where more emphasis is put on conditions in the country of origin. In short, my findings indicate that there are differences between the Scandinavian countries in how asylum cases are decided, and that at least part of these differences can be explained by politics.

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1 Introduction

“It is definitely not the case that applications for asylum are evaluated in a significantly different way. We [Sweden, Denmark, Norway and Finland] are bound by the same international conventions and we assess the applications in a relatively similar manner” – Frode Forfang (2012), Director General of the Norwegian Directorate of Immigration¹

Which factors determine the outcome of an asylum application? Initially, one may argue, as Frode Forfang does in the quote above, that an asylum application is strictly determined by its merit in relation to central human rights conventions. However, scholars have pointed to a vast difference in recognition rates - defined as the percentage of first-instance decisions on asylum applications which result in the applicant being granted protection - across European countries (Carlier 1997: 688-689; Hatton 2009: 199-200; Holzer et al. 2000a: 253; Vink and Meijerink 2003: 308). This is also the case when the asylum seekers are from the same countries (Bronkhorst 1991; Neumayer 2005a: 58; Noll 2000: 236), for instance, in 2009, 57% of Iranians who applied for asylum in Denmark were given refugee status, whilst their recognition rate in Norway was 23% and in Sweden only 16%.² When looking at neighbouring Iraq, in the following year, the pattern is reversed as Sweden recognizes the most refugees and Denmark the fewest. This observation is puzzling, for as Forfang points out, the Scandinavian countries are parts to the same international conventions and thus should be expected to assess applications for asylum in a similar manner. The discrepancy between the expectation of similar recognition rates and the reality of a lack of harmonisation is the point of departure for my research and is further elaborated on below.

What causes the disparity in recognition rates? In this thesis I explore two possible causes for the divergent recognition rates for refugee status. First, by way of partisan theory and literature on partisan effects on policy, I explore the possibility that politics affect the outcome of asylum applications. Specifically, I test whether the composition of government and the voting share of anti-immigration parties affect recognition rates in Scandinavia. Second, I focus on the possibility that the relative merit of the asylum application does determine recognition rates, but that the Scandinavian countries view conditions in the country of origin differently. I do this by constructing an index which measures conditions in the asylum seekers' home countries, in relation to criteria in the Convention relating to the

¹ Translated from Norwegian: ”Det er i hvert fall ikke slik at asylsøknader vurderes vesentlig forskjellig. Vi er bundet av de samme internasjonale konvensjonene og vurderer sakene relativt likt”.

² Number of applications: 206, 499 and 765, respectively.

Status of Refugees (henceforth Refugee Convention)³. I then test whether Norway, Sweden and Denmark differ in the extent to which they grant asylum based on the conditions in the country of origin.

To my knowledge, such a study has never been conducted. Indeed, there is little research on how and why recognition rates vary. Most studies on the subject focus on the number of asylum applications lodged, and not on the determinants of their outcome. The few studies on the subject either limit their study to one country (Gudbrandsen 2010; Holzer et al. 2000b), or they are plagued by poor data, as countries report recognition rates based on vastly different measures. In addition, reporting of these figures have stopped in recent years (Neumayer 2005a; Vink and Meijerink 2003). I choose to focus on the three Scandinavian countries for the time period 1995-2011. By collecting data directly from the countries' respective immigration authorities, I am able to overcome the lack of publicly available data. Moreover, I am able to draw conclusions for the whole Scandinavian region, whilst also conducting an in-depth analysis. Thus, my research contributes to the literature on the determinants of asylum decisions in multiple ways.

My research questions are: *Does government composition and the influence of anti-immigration parties affect recognition rates for refugees in Scandinavia? Is a difference in asylum policy reflected in a different emphasis on conditions in the countries of origin in relation to the Refugee Convention?*

1.1 The puzzle

The expectation that countries' recognition rates should be relatively similar rests on three arguments, according to Noll (2000). First, the Scandinavian countries are all bound by the same international conventions regarding the status of refugees (Noll 2000: 233-234). Most important of these is the Refugee Convention, which includes the internationally recognized definition of a refugee⁴ (Noll 2000: 15). By signing this Convention, the countries signaled a common obligation towards the world's refugees. In addition, the Scandinavian countries

³ In the following, reference to the Refugee Convention will include the Convention as it was modified by the 1967 Protocol relating to the Status of Refugees.

⁴ According to the Refugee Convention, a refugee is a person who: "owing to wellfounded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it" (The Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees 1951 Art. 1A (2)).

have all incorporated this definition word-by-word in their national laws (Udlændingeloven § 8; Utlendingsloven § 28 1 a; Utlänningslag chapter 4 § 1 a), making the definition of a refugee in the three countries identical. This has further increased the similarity of their legal obligations as it does not merely reference an international convention, but has instead been incorporated explicitly in their Foreign Aliens Laws.

Moreover, the importance of the Refugee Convention has been reinforced by its central position in the European Union's (EU) legal framework. A number of EU laws as well as its foundational treaties point to the centrality of member states fulfilling their obligations to the Refugee Convention (see e.g. Treaty Establishing the European Economic Community 1957 Art. 63 (1)) (Noll 2000: 234). The issue of refugee protection has also become more important in the EU, as the union is currently in the process of developing a common policy for asylum, which is "based on the full and inclusive application of the 1951 Geneva Convention" (Sidorenko 2007: 8). While Norway is not a member of the EU, it is bound by the EU minimum standards for asylum through its signing of the Dublin Convention (Brekke 2011: 15; Sidorenko 2007: 16). The three Scandinavian countries then have identical national laws with regards to the definition of a refugee, and they have identical obligations under international and EU law when assessing the merit of an asylum application.

Second, the Dublin Convention of the EU and its successor, Dublin II, presupposes harmonisation of refugee recognition (Noll 2000: 234). Under these Conventions' provisions, only one country is responsible for each asylum application. Unless other provisions are applicable, the application is handled in the first EU-country⁵ the asylum seeker reaches (Sidorenko 2007: 17, 51). In effect, this often denies asylum seekers the possibility of choosing where to lodge their application (Noll 2000: 234). Such legislation assumes that the outcome of the application is not dependent on where it was submitted and that asylum seekers will receive equal treatment regardless of where their application is lodged (Neumayer 2005a: 44). In order to achieve this, recognition rates must be similar. If not, the supposed predictability and equality in treatment will be faulty (Neumayer 2005a: 44, 63; Noll 2000: 234).

Third, Noll argues that a convergence in refugee recognition also follows from a theoretical point of view. There is a rationale to seeking harmonisation, as this will counter a market mechanism where states compete to have the most restrictive asylum policy (Noll

⁵ In this context, this includes Norway.

2000: 235). If asylum seekers can choose where to lodge their application, they are likely to do so in a country that they expect will allow them to stay. Therefore, the countries that receive the most asylum seekers have an incentive to attempt to harmonize recognition rates in order to deter asylum seekers from entering the country. By decreasing the number of asylum seekers, the more popular countries of destination are able to share the costs of receiving asylum seekers with their neighbouring countries. Through this mechanism, Noll expects countries to settle on similar recognition rates. The mechanism in Noll's argument is possible, as there is a connection between recognition rates and the number of applications a country receives. Recent research has found that countries that are perceived to have a less strict asylum policy do receive more applications for asylum than their stricter neighbouring countries (Barthel and Neumayer 2012: 30). A deterrent effect of low recognition rates on asylum applications has been found in several studies, both quantitative and qualitative, case studies and large N (Havinga and Böcker 1999; Holzer et al. 2000b; Neumayer 2004; Robinson and Segrott 2002; Vink and Meijerink 2003). The mechanism pointed to by Noll is particularly relevant to a study of the Scandinavia countries due to their geographical proximity. The issue was also heavily debated in the region after Denmark tightened its immigration policies in the early 2000's, and Sweden experienced a consecutive increase in the number of asylum seekers (Brekke 2004: 30).

As shown, the expectation that countries should have relatively similar recognition rates rests on both judicial and theoretical arguments. In despite of this, recognition rates still vary substantially between European countries (Neumayer 2005a: 58). The discrepancy between theory and reality is the starting point of my research.

1.2 Refugees in Scandinavia

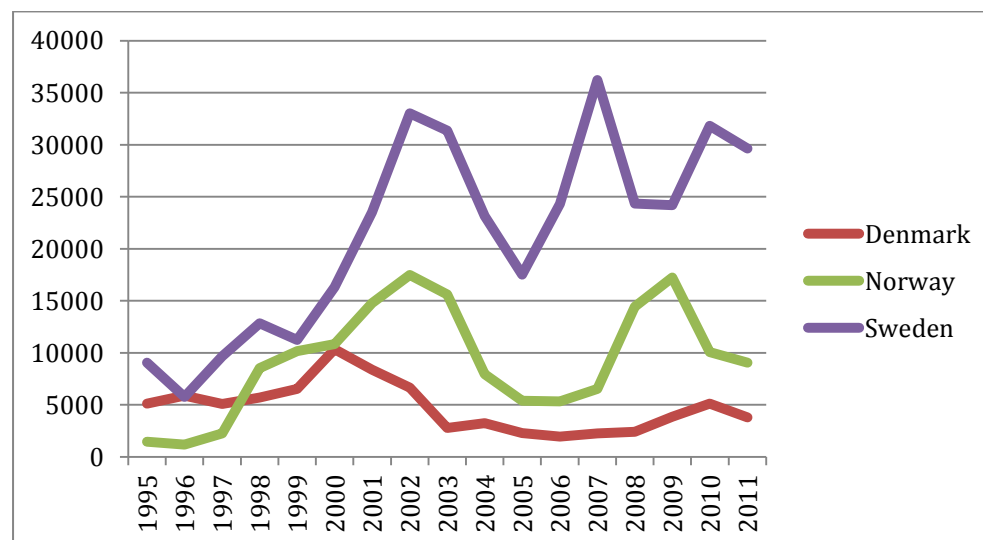
While the formal legal framework for refugee status in the Scandinavian countries is identical, their approach to asylum seekers and their history of immigration is vastly different. I present these differences briefly, before explaining the legal basis for refugee status and the supplementary status.

In the early post-war period, Sweden was the only country in Scandinavia that had any immigration to speak of. Norway and Denmark were largely countries of emigration and only began to receive immigrants of a sizeable portion at the end of the 1960's, when Sweden already had a fairly well developed system of foreign migrant recruitment. This was the main difference between the Scandinavian countries at the time, namely the scale and timing of

immigration. The legal framework was very similar, as, in this period, the borders were largely open to whomever wished to settle or work in the Scandinavian countries, which were in a period of economic growth and welfare expansion. This lasted until the mid 1970's, when all three countries in effect closed their borders to labour migrants from poor countries. Importantly, the "immigration stop" had exemptions for family reunification and asylum seekers. While asylum seekers had arrived prior to the immigration stop as well, they now began to arrive in increasing numbers. In the past few decades the last two categories of migrants have made up the majority of immigrants from non-Western countries (Brochmann and Hagelund 2011: 15-17).

The issue of asylum seekers and how to organize the reception they receive and the rights to which they should be entitled have become increasingly important and controversial issues in Scandinavian politics. It is here the three countries differ. While the Danish Foreign Alien's Law was nicknamed "the most liberal law in the world" in the early 1980's, the country has since repeatedly tightened its policies towards family immigration and asylum seekers, in particular. Denmark is now considered to have one of Europe's strictest asylum policies. In contrast, Sweden is considered to have the continent's most liberal policies. Norway is somewhere in between (Gudbrandsen 2013: 2). While these restrictions are mostly aimed at immigrants' rights, they appear to be reflected in the total number of asylum seekers the countries receive.

Figure 1.1 Number of asylum seekers to Denmark, Norway and Sweden, 1995-2011.



Data compiled from multiple sources: Norwegian Directorate of Immigration (2009) and (2010-2011), Swedish Migration Board (2011), Danish Immigration Service (2011) and UNHCR (1996-1999).

Figure 1.1 shows the number of people who applied for asylum in each of the three countries in the time period of this study. Sweden, with its approximately 9 million citizens, receives around 25000-30000 applicants per year. Norway and Denmark, which both have roughly 5 million citizens, receive around 10000 and 5000 applicants, respectively. This large difference between the countries appears to have emerged around the year 2000. Prior to this, the number of asylum applications lodged in each country was relatively similar. The development in each country is only somewhat similar. After an increase in the early 2000's, there was a decrease for some years in all three countries. In the latest years, Denmark has seen a small increase, whilst Norway experienced a rapid increase, which then decreased again. In Sweden, the pattern is the opposite of Norway, where a decrease around the year 2008 was followed by a recent increase. There is also a large difference in the origin countries of the asylum seekers in each of the three Scandinavian countries (see Table 1.1)

Table 1.1. The five largest sending countries to each Scandinavian country in 2011. Number of asylum applicants in parenthesis⁶.

Denmark	Norway	Sweden
Afghanistan (1146)	Eritrea (1419)	Afghanistan (3545)
Syria (540)	Somalia (1311)	Somalia (2505)
Iran (519)	Afghanistan (1155)	Serbia (2170)
Russia (215)	Iran (419)	Iraq (1833)
Kosovo (116)	Ethiopia (415)	Eritrea (1320)

Data compiled from multiple sources: The Swedish Migration Board, the yearly reports of the Norwegian Directorate of Immigration and the Danish Immigration Service⁷.

There are essentially three possible outcomes of an asylum application. First, it may be rejected, as roughly half of all asylum applications are. Second, the asylum seeker may be granted a supplementary status⁸. Third, he or she may be granted refugee status under the Refugee Convention.

⁶ Only those considered for refugee status, which are also those included in the dataset, are included in this Table. I elaborate on this point under Section 4.4

⁷ The data from Sweden was made available to me by the statistics department of the Migration Board. The yearly reports of the Norwegian Directorate of Immigration and the Danish Immigration Service are available from their respective websites.

⁸ In some countries, these are also termed refugees. However, in this thesis I will exclusively refer to refugees as those granted refuge under the Refugee Convention.

The supplementary status is a collective term for a number of different residence permits. Some of these are regulated by international law, such as the United Nations Convention against Torture, which prohibits its signatories to return a person to a country where he or she may be at the risk of torture. However, national laws in the country of destination regulate most of the laws included under the supplementary status. For instance, there is a permit granted for “humanitarian reasons”, for instance, poor health in need of treatment or a long and special connection to the country of destination.⁹ In popular speech, those who are granted both the supplementary status and the refugee status given under the refugee Convention are often called refugees. Technically, they rarely have this formal status.¹⁰ In short, the supplementary status is comprised of numerous legal paragraphs, which are much less in sync than the status given under the Refugee Convention. As this thesis is motivated by the marked discrepancy despite the similar legal framework, the focus in this thesis is not on the supplementary statuses.

Instead, my focus is on the right to refuge under the Refugee Convention, which provides for the same recognition in which ever signatory country the asylum seekers finds him or herself in.

1.3 The structure of the thesis

The rest of the thesis is organized as follows. In chapter 2, I present a review of the relevant literature for this thesis and attempt to place the research conducted here in a larger context. In chapter 3, I present the central theory guiding my research, namely partisan theory. I focus on how the broad theory is applicable to the field of immigration and asylum, and I develop three hypotheses based on arguments drawn from this theory. Chapter 4 outlines the research design used to answer the central questions posed in this thesis. The argument for a statistical analysis and the variables used are presented. The results of the analysis are discussed in chapter 5 and I check their robustness in chapter 6. In chapter 7, I present some concluding remarks and suggestions for how to proceed in the study of the determinants of asylum recognition.

⁹ This has been heavily debated in Norway in the last year, particularly with regards to children’s connection to the country. It has also been debated in the two other countries on previous occasions.

¹⁰ An exception is those granted refuge under any international convention (not just the Refugee Convention), who are most often also considered refugees. This is the case in Norway after the new Foreigners Law of 2008 (Ot. prp. nr. 75 2006-2007: 71).

1.4 Main findings

I set out to examine the effect of politics on recognition rates. I find support for such an effect of governmental parties. Recognition rates are higher under left-leaning governments than under centre-right-leaning governments in Scandinavia, which supports partisan theory. I do not find support for my hypothesis that anti-immigration parties have a negative effect on recognition rates. Numerous scholars have argued that Denmark has a stricter asylum policy than Norway, which in turn is stricter than Sweden's policy. The emphasis on conditions in the country of origin of asylum seekers follows this pattern. Denmark places more weight on such conditions than Norway does, and Sweden places the least emphasis on such conditions when recognizing refugees.

2 Literature review

2.1 Academic interest in refugee recognition

There is not much research on the determinants of refugee recognition rates. Studies on asylum procedures in Europe have mostly concentrated on the number of arriving asylum seekers, and some also how many are granted residence, but not on the factors which determine the outcome of the applications. Hence, the previous literature dealing with the subject matter of this thesis is limited, but it does provide some clues to which results may be expected and which methods will yield correct results.

Academic interest in asylum seekers and refugees in Europe began partly as a result of the increase in asylum seekers in Europe in the 1980's. The European countries responded to the change in the composition of asylum seekers and their increasing numbers in vastly different ways (Vink and Meijerink 2003: 298-300). As a result, the first studies on this subject dealt with the consequential discrepancies in asylum policy and in recognition rates. Bronkhorst (1991) authored the first of such studies and demonstrates differences in recognition rates by way of simple percentages and the use of an Amnesty International index of human rights violations. In so doing, he showed a discrepancy of recognition rates both between countries and within countries, as one country may admit varying percentages of refugees from countries with identical scores on the Amnesty index. Thus, he also showed the potential randomness in who is admitted as a refugee and who is not in this time period.

Studies which attempt to explain these discrepancies further, only came later and after the European Union decided to work towards a common asylum policy in the Tampere process of 1999 (Vevstad 2012: 2). This increased academic interest in the subject of asylum policy, and two questions received particular attention. First, many researches focused on whether or not European countries were becoming more similar as the EU-process developed. Second, many concerned themselves with the question of which countries were taking most of the burden of granting refugee status and receiving many asylum applicants. Hence, most studies on recognition rates have been written against the backdrop of a developing EU policy for harmonisation of the asylum burden. Many of them focus more on the determinants of asylum applications, including the effect of a low or high recognition rate (see e.g Hatton 2009; Neumayer 2004), than on the determinants of the recognition itself.

The discrepancies in recognition rates have also served as a way to establish patterns of EU harmonization. Holzer and Schneider (2002) find a convergence of recognition rates for both countries in the EU and in the OECD in the time period 1983-1995. In contrast, Neumayer (2005a) argues that there has been no convergence in recognition rates in the time period from 1980-1999. Importantly, their time periods do not include the period after the Tampere process of 1999, which later resulted in the adoption of many of the major legal acts concerning asylum procedures. Toshkov and de Haan (2013) show that there is evidence of a convergence in recognition rates when looking both at specific countries of origin and overall recognition rates for both the Convention status and the supplementary status for the time period 2000-2010. Importantly, Toshkov and de Haan have only had access to recognition rates for the ten countries that account for the most asylum applications in Europe. This may have biased their results, as it is perhaps easier to harmonize recognition rates for large sending countries than for those who do not send quite as many and are unevenly distributed between the EU-countries. The conclusion of the authors is that they do find evidence of a convergence, but that the differences in recognition rates are still large and includes some “appaling examples” (Toshkov and de Haan 2013: 15). These conclusions are important, as they show that while there appears to be a certain level of convergence there are still differences in recognition rates, despite a decade of European integration on asylum procedures.

2.2 The previous studies

Those who have studied the determinants of refugee recognition have pointed to several reasons for the discrepancy showed by Neumayer and Toshkov and de Haan, among others. There are only five such previous studies, namely Neumayer (2005a), Holzer et al (2000a), Holzer and Schneider et al (2002), Gudbrandsen (2010) and Toshkov (2013). The low number of previous studies on the subject and the fact that their research focus and methods vary greatly, imply that their results should be considered indications. No clear trend has yet been established. Knowledge of the subject is only beginning to take shape, and the evidence presented should be treated as indications of patterns and not as definite answers. I will proceed to outline the four previous studies of the determinants of recognition rates. All these studies are quantitative studies, and, if not otherwise stated, they focus on the Western European nations.

2.2.1 Holzer and Schneider (2002)

The earliest study on the determinants of recognition rates across European countries was Holzer and Schneider's book from 2002. Their study covers the time period 1983-1995, and they use a combined measure of the Convention status and the supplementary status as the basis for their dependent variable¹¹. The focus of Holzer and Schneider is on conditions in the country of destination - in particular, they aim to test whether a change in government parties affect recognition rates. This is similar to my study. They find that neither support for anti-immigration parties nor the ideology of government parties (left-leaning, centre, right-leaning) matter in determining recognition rates. Nor does economic conditions in the country of destination prove to have a significant effect. The only factor the authors find to affect this recognition rate is the number of applicants, which has a negative effect.

The inclusion of the latter variable does, however, introduce a slight methodological problem. There is a two-way causal link between recognition rates and applications, in that recognition rates may also affect the number of asylum seekers who decide to lodge their application in that country and not just the other way around. This is not the effect Holzer and Schneider aim to capture, but as they do not incorporate a few years time lag in the variable, they may have captured just this effect.

A much larger problem for this study is that the authors do not control for factors pertaining to the composition of asylum seekers in each country of destination. As European countries receive asylum seekers from very different countries and in differing numbers, it is crucial to control for the effect of conditions in the country of origin. If this is not done, the observed effect of country of destination variables may be entirely spurious. The authors recognize this flaw, but they do not believe a different composition of asylum seekers is the only explanation for the difference in recognition rates (Holzer and Schneider 2002: 42-43). This is true, but when they attempt to estimate the effect of other factors, they must first control for the composition effect, which they fail to do.

2.2.2 Neumayer (2005a)

Neumayer (2005a) focuses on whether it is only conditions in the country of origin which determine the asylum outcome or whether conditions in the country of destination also

¹¹ Their analysis does not include Denmark and Sweden, as they lacked data for these countries. This is not particularly problematic. The country-specific estimates are not reported and the number of countries analysed is large, so the inclusion of Denmark and Sweden would most likely not have altered their conclusions.

influence decisions. The study is broad; as he studies all possible factors that may affect recognition rates, and there is no particular focus on politics. The paper includes two analyses, one for the full Refugee status and one for a measure of the supplementary status and the Refugee status, both for Western European countries from 1980-1999. Neumayer finds that conditions in both origin and destination countries matter for the Refugee status. Specifically, economic factors, such as low GDP per capita and high unemployed rate cause lower recognition rates, as does the level of previous asylum seekers from the same origin country as the applicant. At the same time, the level of autocracy, human rights violations, the extent of war and instances of genocide or politicide have a positive effect on recognition rates. Neumayer concludes that while the variables for the country of origin do influence recognition rates, they are also subject to variations depending on the economic conditions in the country of destination.

2.2.3 Gudbrandsen (2010)

Gudbrandsen (2010) investigates what influence political factors have on the outcome of asylum applications in Norway from 1985 to 2005. Hence, differences in recognition rates between countries are not a focus in her study, nor are conditions in the countries of origin, though she does control for such factors. Another important aspect of this study is that Gudbrandsen uses a combined recognition rate, similar to one of Neumayer's analysis. Still, her conclusions provide important insights into factors that influences whether or not an asylum seeker will be granted residence in Norway. Gudbrandsen finds that unemployment has a statistically significant and negative effect, whilst the number of asylum seekers from each sending country has a positive effect. This latter finding is in contrast to the effect found by Neumayer.

The main focus of Gudbrandsen's study is on the effect of a change in government. This is measured by dummy variables indicating which parties were in government. She separates between Labour, Centre and Conservative governments. Gudbrandsen finds that there is a statistically significant difference between Conservative and Labour party governments. The effect is large, as "Conservative governments admitted, on average, 15 fewer refugees from each country per year than Labour party governments" (Gudbrandsen 2010: 264). As Gudbrandsen finds an effect of a change in government from Labour party to Conservative governments, she concludes in support of partisan theory, which she, like this study, uses to argue for a political effect on recognition rates.

2.2.4 Toshkov (2013)

Some last clues into the determinants of recognition rates are presented in a yet unpublished paper by Toshkov (2013) for the time period 2000-2010. His focus is mainly on the effect of the number of asylum seekers on recognition rates, but he also examines a number of other possible factors.

Toskhov finds an effect of his main independent variable. The level of previous asylum seekers in the country appears to be negatively associated with recognition rates. He also attempts to test the effect of government support for immigration and multiculturalism on recognition rates. The variable is constructed through content analyses of party manifestoes, which is then aggregated as government positions. Toshkov finds no effect of this variable. The other variables include: economic factors, specifically GDP per capita and the unemployment rate in the destination countries. These matter only when the dependent variable is origin-specific recognition rates, and not the countries' total recognition rates, and when the time frame is extended from 1987-2010. The effect could therefore be accounted for by the composition of asylum seekers in each country, as the recognition rates are not specific to each country of origin when this effect is found.

A problem in Toshkov's analysis is that his dataset is very limited for the main analysis. He has only been able to use origin-specific recognition rates for the ten largest suppliers of asylum-seekers, since these data from most countries is not readily available. This is highly problematic as countries that send many refugees may be subject to different mechanisms than those that guide the asylum process as a whole. Moreover, not all countries receive a great many number of asylum seekers from the countries which send the largest number of asylum seekers in total. For instance, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) is a large sending country, but the number of asylum seekers from DRC to Norway and Denmark, is small. Nonetheless, Toshkov draws some interesting conclusions relevant to this paper, as shown above.

2.2.1 Holzer et al (2000a)

Lastly, Holzer et al (2000a) have studied the differences between the Swiss cantons in a comprehensive study of the effects of institutional arrangements on recognition rates. This focus on the Swiss cantons makes for a very different analysis than the other studies mentioned and the conclusions of the study are not as easily transferrable to my own study.

Still, I include this study here, as their conclusions are still relevant, particularly as they highlight some of the controls that must be incorporated into the analysis of the Scandinavian countries. Due to the vast difference in focus of this study and the other studies, I also mention here how I incorporate the findings of this study.

Holzer et al find that the delegation of asylum applications to the cantons leads to large differences in recognition rates. Their study is one of few that have had access to individual data, such as the age, marital status and gender of the applicant, and the only one with such access in the research on recognition rates. While the individual characteristics of the applicant have the strongest impact on the outcome of an application, there are still variations that are caused by features of the cantons. The authors' main interest is the effect of the organizational structure of the asylum administration in each canton. They find that a centralized asylum administration has a negative effect on recognition rates, although this effect disappears when the share of foreigners residing in a canton is included in combination with the attitude of the local citizens. The authors find evidence that cantons where there is a large share of foreign residence and the population is sceptical of asylum seekers have low recognition rates. They also find that medium-sized cantons have a lower recognition than small and large cantons.

The evidence of this study points in the direction that different recognition rates are affected by the institutional characteristics of asylum administrations. Moreover, the wishes of the native population appear to also affect recognition rates. Both these aspects are included in my own study. First, the strict focus on the Scandinavian countries, which have organized their asylum administrations in the same way (Sicakkan 2008: 214), allows me to keep this effect constant. Second, my focus on the responsiveness of political parties to their voters takes into account Holzer et al's finding that the population's attitude toward asylum seekers matter. Their finding is supported by another study by Gudbrandsen (2013) who found that asylum policies (not specifically recognition rates) in Scandinavia are sensitive to the public preferences of voters in the three Scandinavian countries. Most importantly, Gudbrandsen finds that it is not the preference of the median voter that is most significant in changing asylum policies. Such changes are most sensitive to changes in the preferences of the voters of the government parties. Thus, Gudbrandsen links public opinions toward asylum seekers, as in Holzer et al's study, to politics. I further develop this finding in my study, as I focus on government parties and the effect of government change.

2.2.2 Summary of previous findings and my contribution

As this literature review has shown, there is no clear pattern of which factors in the countries of destination are important in determining the outcome of an asylum application. However, the lack of a pattern should also be treated with caution as the studies use very different operationalizations for many variables. A rough summary of the findings in Neumayer (2005a), Toshkov (2013), Holzer and Schneider (2002) and Gudbrandsen (2010) is presented in Table 2.1 below. I exclude Holzer et al's study of the Swiss cantons, since the units studied and variables included are very different. As the studies agree on an effect of origin-specific factors, I do not include these. An empty cell implies that the study does not include this variable.

Table 2.1. Summary of findings in selected studies.

Variables	Neumayer (2005a)	Holzer and Schneider (2002)	Gudbrandsen (2010)	Toshkov (2013)
Dependent variable	Refugee Convention	Combined measure with supplementary status	Combined measure with supplementary status	Refugee Convention
Independent variable: Government parties		No effect	Negative effect for Conservative parties compared to Labour party.	No effect
Independent variable: Anti-immigration parties	No effect	No effect		
Independent variable: Economic factors	Lower recognition rate when high unemployment rate and low GDP (per capita).	No effect	Unemployment rate has a negative effect	No effect, only when recognition rates are not origin-specific
Independent variable: Level of previous asylum seekers	Negative effect.	Negative effect	Positive effect	Negative effect

This thesis extends the literature by both taking up some of the above-mentioned issues, whilst also adding new possible influences on recognition rates. The purpose of the study itself is also different from most of the studies mentioned above. Most importantly, I focus solely on the refugee status under the Refugee Convention. In so doing, I have an explicit aim of not only investigating factors which influence recognition rates, but also that what makes them vary between countries. This focus is lacking from previous studies on this topic.

While factors such as the economic conditions and the level of previous asylum seekers is controlled for, the main focus is on the effect of political parties. As is shown in the Table above, this is a part of the focus of Toshkov (2013), Gudbrandsen (2010) and Holzer and Schneider (2002). Despite these three studies, a focus on politics is still relevant and the effect has not been established once and for all. As mentioned above, there are methodological problems associated with both Toshkov's and Holzer and Schneider's studies. In addition, Gudbrandsen's study focuses solely on Norway, which implies that its conclusions cannot readily be generalized to a larger number of countries. This is of course a problem with my study as well, since I include on only three countries. However, an effect of political parties in my thesis would further indicate that such a pattern might be present in other countries as well.

A second measure of the effects of politics is that of support for anti-immigration parties. This has not been studied beyond that of Neumayer (2005a) and Holzer and Schneider (2002). Both of their time frames end in the 1990's, prior to the large increase in those parties' support in much of Europe and Scandinavia. Hence, the effect such parties may have had on recognition rates has not been adequately studied, and the evidence from Neumayer and Holzer and Schneider is ready to be updated by a more recent dataset that includes much of the increase in these parties' popularity.

Lastly, this thesis investigates whether the Scandinavian countries assess conditions in the country of origin differently. I have found no studies which explores this potential contributing cause of varying recognition rates. While Gudbrandsen and Neumayer do estimate the effect of various conditions in the country of origin of asylum seekers on recognition rates, they do not compare these between countries. Neumayer also includes dummy variables for the countries of destination. However, due to poor data quality it is difficult to interpret these directly, as Neumayer himself states. Neumayer's data is gathered from UNHCR, and there is some variations in how the countries calculate their own recognition rates.

In contrast, my analysis only focuses on three of the countries included by Neumayer, and since I have gathered most of the data myself, I am able to interpret the differences between the Scandinavian countries in my analysis. This is important because there are no studies that systematically compare the effect their variables have on recognition rates between different countries of destination. My research is one step in this direction, as I compare the effect of conditions in the country of origin of asylum seekers on the likelihood of refugee recognition in each of the Scandinavian countries.

3 Partisan theory and the partisan effect on immigration

The central proposition of this thesis, that political parties and policies affect recognition rates for refugee status, rests on the assumption that, ultimately, *politics matter*. To date, the effects of partisanship on public policy has been most researched, and argued for, in the political economy tradition (Bale 2008a: 463). Hence, my theoretical assumptions are drawn from this literature and from the studies in other disciplines that have applied the ideas laid out in the political economy tradition. I combine the theory's central predictions with literature on voter and party preferences with regard to immigration. Thus, in this chapter I first present the partisan theory, before arguing for the applicability of this theory to the subject of immigration. I then analyse the immigration positions of voters in Norway, Sweden and Denmark, in addition to party ideology, which I use to develop two hypotheses. Lastly, I connect the influence of politics on recognition rates to one possible way in which this may manifest itself, namely as a different emphasis on conditions in the asylum seekers' countries of origin. This gives my last hypothesis.

3.1 Partisan theory

Partisan theory was first presented by Hibbs (1977). In this paper, he argues that political parties, organized along the left-right axis, pursue macroeconomic policies in accordance with the "objective economic interests and subjective preferences of their class-defined core political constituencies" (Hibbs 1977: 1468). Specifically, Hibbs considers the trade-off between inflation and unemployment, where the working-class is thought to be objectively more vulnerable to unemployment, whilst the upper income group will be more concerned with inflation. This is reflected in survey data of voters' economic preferences. Based on these objective considerations of what will benefit their constituencies and also what their constituencies seek, the labour-oriented, working-class based Labour and Socialist parties prioritize full employment, whereas Conservative parties and their business-oriented, upper middle-class based constituencies will attach greater importance to inflation (Hibbs 1977: 1470).

Since then, partisan theory has extended beyond the field of political economy, and into the field of political science more broadly, as researchers have applied theory's key

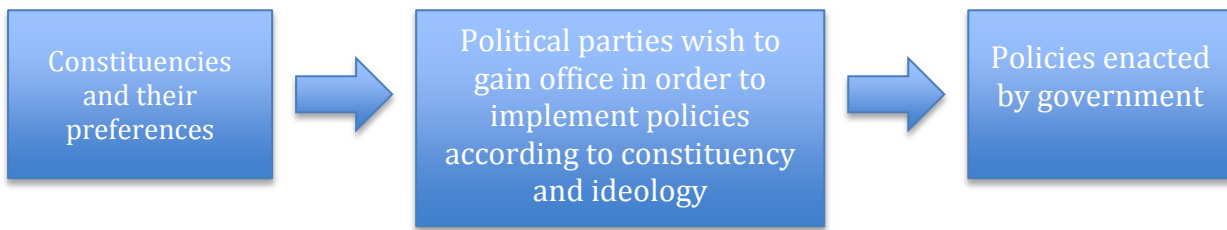
arguments to other research areas. In short, the central assumption of the theory is that the principal objective of parties in government is to implement policies that favour their core constituencies (Hibbs 1994: 2).

According to partisan theory, politicians have two main motivations, which are not mutually exclusive. First, they wish to be re-elected. Second, they represent the ‘ideology’ of the party, thereby harbouring certain ideological biases. Hence, while they are self-interested, politicians act as if they have preferences above specific policy issues (Alesina et al. 1989: 56, 60). Gaining office is a goal, but election is viewed as a means to control policy, rather than vice versa (Chappell and Keech 1986: 882). Furthermore, partisan theory supposes that different social and/or ethnic groups vote for different political parties and as such make up their political constituencies (Alesina et al. 1989: 60). These voters are aware of the partisan difference and they will vote for the party which offer solutions and policies closest to their preferred outcome, and the party will then in turn pursue different policies to retain their support (Alesina et al. 1989: 60; Alesina and Roubini 1992: 666). Hence, politics is conceived “as a market in which politicians and governments deliver policies in exchange for specific or generalised political demand and support” (Schmidt 1996: 155).

This logic is in sharp contrast to Downs’ (1957) well-known model, which assumes that parties do not wish to gain office in order to implement policies for their constituencies, but rather to attain the “income, power and prestige of being in office” (Downs 1957: 137), ultimately resulting in a convergence of policies in two-party systems as the parties aim to satisfy the median voter (Alesina et al. 1989: 60). Instead, partisan theory’s focus on parties’ ideology and policy preferences, in addition to their wish to gain office, causes it to proposition that differences in the policies enacted by the parties will be both systematic and permanent (Alesina and Roubini 1992: 663; Chappell and Keech 1986: 881-882).

Partisan theory assumes that governments are capable of enacting and implementing the policies chosen. There will therefore be both cross-country variation and within-country variation in policy. However, socioeconomic challenges and economic resources affect the ease with which parties can do this. Such factors therefore have to be controlled for in an analysis of partisan effects (Schmidt 1996: 156). Figure 3.1, below, illustrates the causal implications of partisan theory.

Figure 3.1. The causal mechanisms proposed by partisan theory.



Source: Schmidt 1996.

As pointed out above, while partisan theory began in the field of political economy, it has since been used in a broader array of studies. The primary focus has been on public policy, and a comparative approach to the subject has been prevalent (Schmidt 1996: 155-156). Most notably, the effect of partisan influence has been important in the study of the welfare state (see Häusermann et al. 2013 for a comprehensive review). However, it has also been employed in research on such diverse subjects as environmental cooperation (Schulze 2013), state aid to industry in the European Union (Zahariadis 2010), public investment in education (Busemeyer 2009), and, as mentioned in the literature review, immigration policy (Gudbrandsen 2010). My research adds to this diverse field, by expanding on Gudbrandsen's study, and applying partisan theory in a comparative approach to a field guided by international conventions, namely asylum policy.

3.2 From partisan theory to immigration

In this section, I will draw mostly from literature on immigration. This is because most sources document implications of public attitudes toward immigration as a whole, and often do not refer to the specific impact of preferences toward asylum seekers and refugee recognition. However, it is probable that attitudes toward immigration will be mirrored in attitudes toward asylum policy, thus making the former a valid proxy for the latter. First of all, asylum is a sub-category of immigration. When answering a question regarding immigration or immigrants as a whole, asylum seekers or refugees cannot be excluded. Second, it is likely that many people associate immigration policy with asylum, as this receives the most coverage in the media and is more often subject of debate than other areas of immigration policy, such as family reunification policy. For these reasons, I will refer to immigration as a whole in this section, whilst also pointing out specific references toward asylum policy and refugees whenever applicable.

The applicability of partisan theory to a study of partisan influence on recognition rates for refugees is largely determined by whether the causal mechanisms in the theory should be considered probable for this field of study. Thus, there is a question of whether or not the main assumptions of the theory are reasonable for this policy area. The main assumptions of partisan theory is that first, voters have preferences with regards to immigration and asylum policy and they care about whether or not there is a change in policy and second, it should be reasonable to assume that governments do have the capacity to control immigration and recognition rates. These assumptions must be fulfilled if the predictions of partisan theory should be considered valid and thus they are prerequisites for the applicability of this theory. In the discussion below, I will argue, by drawing from previous literature on the subject, that both these assumptions are valid for the study of immigration.

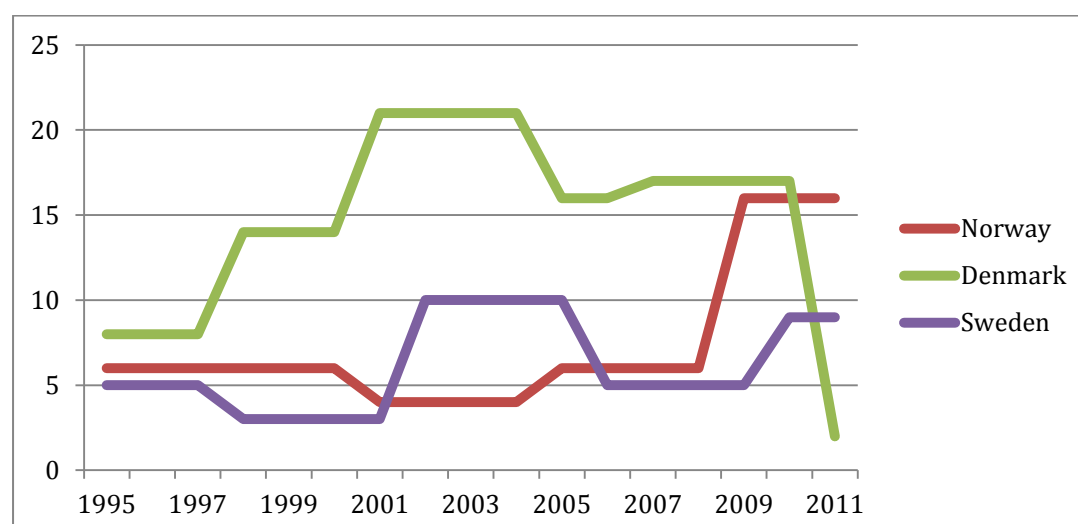
The first assumption regards the saliency of the issue of immigration to the electorate. Until the mid-1980's, few people in Scandinavia listed immigration as important for their choice of party (Andersen and Bjørklund 2007: 8-9; Holmberg and Oscarsson 2011a: 11). However, a dramatic increase in the number of immigrants and asylum seekers in the following years caused the issue to rise on the voters' agenda as problems such as the immigrants' high unemployment rate and lower standards of living became apparent (Andersen and Bjørklund 2007: 9; Brochmann and Hagelund 2011: 17). Since then, the issue has remained important to many voters. Figure 3.2 illustrates the percentage of people who name immigration as an important issue in election surveys, for the period presented in the statistical analysis. Importantly, the numbers are not comparable across countries, as the wording of the question is different in the three countries, particularly in Denmark, where it refers specifically to refugees and not immigration as a whole. However, they still provide important information as to whether or not immigration is important to each of the three electorates.

Immigration appears to have held a relatively stable position in Sweden, where between 3 and 10% of the electorate has named immigration as an important issue for them in the election. The development in Norway is somewhat similar, although the latest election, in 2009, was a marked exception, as 16% of voters reported immigration to have been one of the top reasons why they voted for the party they did (Aardal and Karlsen 2011: 134). In Denmark, immigration has been of much more varied importance for the electorate. The figures reported here show a rapid increase in the 1990's, culminating in the 2001 election, where 23% of the electorate viewed the refugee situation as one of the most important issues

politicians should handle. Since then, the issue has decreased in importance, to a low of only 2% in the most recent election in 2011 (Holm et al 2013: 20).

Immigration has not been as important for voters in Sweden and Norway as it has for voters in Denmark, for most of the time period reported here. This does not, however, preclude the significance of the issue in Norway and Sweden. A percentage between five and ten is still enough to have an effect on the outcome of an election in terms of both government formation and seats in parliament. Consequently, political parties should be expected to regard immigration as important enough to take a stance on the issue and also to develop policy according to what their constituencies seek.

Figure 3.2. The percentage of persons who mention immigration as an important issue for them in the national elections in Scandinavia.¹²



Data compiled from multiple sources: Holmberg and Oscarsson (2011b: 60), Holm et al (2013: 20)¹³ and Aardal and Karlsen (2011: 134).

In both electoral surveys and other surveys, voters in Scandinavia have been asked for their opinion regarding several issues relating to immigration, asylum and the immigrant population. These surveys have made it clear that the public is both consistent in their views and that they hold a variety of opinions; there are people who want a very restrictive immigration policy and people who hold much more liberal views in this regard (Aardal 2007b: 49; Forsberg and Hedberg 2011; Nielsen 2007: 162). Interestingly, according to a

¹² It was possible to mention more than one issue in the surveys.

¹³ The data for Denmark is based on a graph in this source. The figures may therefore be slightly off, but should correspond closely to the correct number.

comparative study, the Scandinavian electorate does not differ greatly when asked whether they wish to limit refugee admission. The percentage varies from 41% in Sweden, 44% in Denmark and 55% in Norway, in 2002 (Nielsen 2004: 226).

It may be argued that in surveys people have to answer the question asked and therefore these should not be considered a valid measure for whether or not people have clear preferences. However, as people place themselves at both ends of a given scale, and not simply in the middle, and as they show consistency in their answers, their replies seem not to be given merely because they are forced to have an opinion. Moreover, differences between voters clearly manifest themselves through which party they vote for. Some parties' voters are clearly more anti-immigration than others, whilst others are more pro-immigration (Aardal 2007b: 49; Holmberg and Oscarsson 2011b: 73; Nielsen 2007: 166-168). Asylum and immigration policy has also proven to be a deeply polarizing issue in the electorate in Denmark (Nielsen 2007: 166), and increasingly so in Norway (Aardal 2011: 100). The recent increase in support for the anti-immigration party in Sweden, the Sweden Democrats, points to a similar development there.

Thus, voters appear to have specific opinions on immigration and these are not independent from party choice. Combined with the fact that immigration has been a significant issue for many voters since the mid-1980's, the first prerequisite for applying partisan theory to this field – that voters have preferences with regard to immigration and asylum policy and that they care about whether or not there is a change in policy – should be considered valid for a study of asylum policy.

However, the preferences of the electorate are of little importance if governments cannot control the admission of refugees. Following Gudbrandsen (2010: 251 - 252), there are two important arguments for why government may not be able to control immigration for work, studies or family, and also the number of people who enter the state in order to seek asylum.

First, international obligations and the human rights conventions the countries are bound by, set certain requirements, which the states cannot deflect from. This should limit the governments' ability to influence asylum decisions to a certain extent (Thielemann 2003: 5; Triadafilopoulos and Zaslove 2006: 174-175). When Norway and Denmark tightened their asylum policies in the mid 2000's, both countries emphasised the importance of upholding their commitments to international conventions (Arbeidsdepartementet 2008; Regeringen 2002). This is an important point, since the recognition rates analysed in this study are only based on those who are granted refugee status under international law.

In addition, many researchers have argued that globalization, through the increasing role of the global economy and the importance of inter-state cooperation, has decreased national sovereignty (see e.g Evans 1997) and decreased the state's capacity to control issues such as immigration (Sassen 2005). This has made it particularly difficult to control the number of people who seek asylum, which in turn makes it difficult to control exactly how many are granted refugee status. While immigration and migration movements are seen largely as autonomous processes, they are in reality connected with a number of other events, such as military intervention and economic trade policy. For instance, internationalization of production may cause local farmers to lose their livelihood and thereby migrate to somewhere their labour is needed. The basis of Sassen's (2005) argument is supported empirically by Neumayer (2005b), who demonstrate that people choose to emigrate and seek asylum for a variety of reasons. As migration is interwoven with a number of other developments, it makes the phenomenon much harder to control and govern, particularly because it has not been recognized as being embedded in larger dynamics (Sassen 2005: 35-36, 38).

Second, while a government may have enacted a specific immigration policy, the implementation process may disturb the connection between political intent and final output. This may limit the government's ability to effectively control immigration. Often, this is cited as the reason for why immigration has increased, despite governments' attempts to reduce "unwanted" immigration, termed "the gap hypothesis" (Cornelius and Takeyuki 2004: 4-5). There are a number of possible ways in which an intended policy may be distorted on the way to implementation. Various researchers have pointed to the importance of such factors as the resources made available to those implementing the policy, their communication with those who decided on the policy, the extent to which the policy is concrete in its purpose and the amount of "follow-up" by political officials (Hill and Hupe 2009: 46-48). In addition, policy implementation includes a number of different actors, typically civil servants, administrative officials and in some cases, non-governmental organizations. One danger is that these actors may, over time, identify more with those regulated, than with those who regulate. In the extreme, this may undermine the regulatory structure established to implement the policy. The successful implementation may also depend on the group targeted in the policy. The more diverse the target group; the more difficult the implementation (Hewlett et al. 2009: 164, 166-167). Combined, these possible difficulties show that there are some very important possible limitations to the capability of government to control different policy areas, such as immigration.

However, several empirical studies conclude that governments do have the capacity to control both immigration flows (Guiraudon and Lahav 2000) and the number of people who enter the country to seek asylum (Brekke 2004; Holzer et al. 2000b; Neumayer 2004; Thielemann 2003). These studies do not measure the influence of left-leaning versus centre-right leaning governments on immigration, as they focus on policy, but their results indicate that different governments may lead to different outcomes in the field of immigration, as it is they who control policy.

This evidence concerns immigration and not recognition rates specifically. Still, refugee recognition is an integral part of immigration, and thus, as governments have the capacity to control immigration and the number of asylum seekers, a possible effect of differing governments seems likely for recognition rates as well. Furthermore, as mentioned in the literature review, Gudbrandsen (2010) finds that partisan politics does affect recognition rates for the combined status of refugees and the supplementary status. While this points to a possible partisan effect on the more limited recognition as well, there are important limitations to policy-makers when constructing policy with regards to refugee recognition rates. A main distinction between refugee status on the one hand, and the supplementary status and other parts of immigration law on the other, is that the refugee status is to an even larger extent regulated by international law. However, as recognition rates do vary - these legal constraints are clearly not enough, other factors must also be at play. As with all laws, it is largely up to the government to determine how the Refugee Convention shall be interpreted, conservatively or more liberally (Hatton 2009: 196). This interpretation may vary from government to government.

There are two possible ways in which a government may influence recognition rates: By evaluating specific events in foreign countries to be, or not be, dangerous enough for applicants to fulfil the criteria in the Refugee Convention, or by changing the interpretation of the Convention itself in a more liberal or restrictive direction. The former may influence the number of people recognized from a limited group of countries. However, such decisions are often made by bureaucrats, and not by politicians. The latter will often affect individuals from a larger set of countries and may be more effective in reducing the total number of asylum seekers. As previously mentioned, a low recognition rate has been shown to deter asylum seekers from applying in that country. Hence, a change in recognition rates may be a powerful policy tool in this regard, and a liberalization or restriction in the interpretation of the law is often up to politicians through new memos or new laws. In light of the arguments presented here, I conclude that it is possible for government to control recognition rates.

Thus, the two main prerequisites of partisan theory are satisfied. Voters both care about the issue of immigration, and they have opinions about which policies should be pursued. While there are a number of reasons for why government may not be able to control immigration, several empirical contributions show that they do. For these reasons, it is both possible, and interesting, to examine the effect of national politics on recognition rates. The three hypothesis tested in this regard are explained below.

3.3 Hypotheses

In this section, I outline the three central propositions of this thesis. I focus on the possible effects of the centre-right versus left-wing government, the influence of an anti-immigration party and last, how such changes in policy may manifest themselves empirically between the three countries.

3.3.1 Centre-right-wing versus left-wing governments

In this thesis, I focus on the traditional left-right axis of political parties' economic policies to separate the ideological foundations of the different parties. It may of course be argued that parties' opinions on immigration do not follow the left-right axis and that the use of this axis is a simplification of the immigration issue in Scandinavian politics today. However, in the time period studied, all governments in Scandinavia have been formed along the left-right axis. As recognition rates are thought to change as a result of the change in government, these governments are the primary focus, and the discussion of government positions on immigration must therefore be analysed along this axis. Also, there has only been one government that did not include one of the major parties of the left and right, which is not enough to effectively analyse the effect of parties-of-centre governments. I will therefore employ a dichotomy between left-wing governments and centre-right governments.

According to partisan theory the parties in government will seek to implement the policies which first, benefit their constituencies and second, which their voters support. I separate the parties of the left and those of the centre-right based on these motivations for policy. I will use these two motivations when establishing the governments' expected influence on recognition rates. I do this by referring largely to evidence from electoral surveys. Some of this may be considered anecdotal, since there does not exist evidence to show a complete long-term pattern. Much of the specific raw data I require is available only for some election years, and they are lacking for some, mostly older, elections. There is,

however, little reason to believe that much of the evidence I present will have changed in the time period studied, as the stance on immigration for most parties has been relatively consistent. I begin by assessing the opinions of the two blocks' voters, before turning to the ideology of the two party blocks and the voting pattern of the immigration population.

In Europe in general, those of the majority population who vote for parties on the left are less concerned with questions of immigration than those who vote for centre-right parties (Bale 2008b: 320). Drawing from a sample of election surveys in Scandinavia, this pattern is partly confirmed for this region (Aardal and Karlsen 2007: 118; Andersen 2002: 6; Holmberg and Oscarsson 2011b: 61). While those who consider immigration to be an important issue largely vote for the right, also when excluding the anti-immigration parties, those who consider immigration to be the least important are those who vote for the parties in the centre. The voters for the left parties are placed in the middle. For the two traditionally largest parties in Scandinavia, the Social Democrats on the left and a conservative party on the right, a larger share of conservative voters lists immigration as important to them. However, overall the difference is not great. Bale (2008b) argues that this is part of a larger pattern, where voters of the centre-right parties also wishes to restrict immigration to a larger extent than voters on the left-wing. Bale bases his argument on the fact that the political parties at the centre-right emphasise a defence of the socio-economic and cultural status quo, lower taxes and law and order. These goals may be perceived as being threatened by the presence of ethnic minorities (Schain 2008: 468), which indeed bring challenges to the traditional status quo in terms of demographics, and are overrepresented in welfare rolls and crime statistics (Bale 2008b: 319-320).

Restrictive attitudes toward immigration and refugees appear to be more common for centre-right voters in Scandinavia as well.¹⁴ In the 1997 election survey, the centre-right-wing of the Norwegian electorate agree more with the statement that immigration should be restricted to a larger extent, than left-leaning voters did. However, when disregarding the anti-immigration party from the centre-right block, the difference largely disappears, and the voters of the centre-right are only marginally more restrictive (Aardal et al. 1999: 43). This same pattern is evident for the 2001 election (Aardal et al. 2003: 73). In the 2005 election, the Centre party is included in the left-leaning block as they formed an alliance with the Labour Party and the Socialist Left prior to the election. This contributes to shifting the average of the left-leaning voters towards a more restrictive stance on immigration. However, the centre-

¹⁴ See Table A.1 in the appendix for an overview of which parties are classified as left-leaning and which are considered centre-right for this part of the analysis.

right block is still more negative towards increased immigration (Aardal 2007a: 85). In the analysis of the 2009 Norwegian election, the voters of the left still view immigration more favourable than those who vote for the centre-right. This is the case both when including voters of the Progress Party and when excluding them (Aardal 2011: 100).

In the 2005 election survey in Denmark, the pattern is much more clear-cut. When asked whether or not Denmark should accept more, fewer or the same level of refugees, there is a clear division between voters of the left-wing and those who vote for the centre-right. Those on the left side of the political spectrum are much more inclined to say that Denmark should receive more refugees, while the opposite is true for those who vote for the centre/right-wing parties (Nielsen 2007: 165). For Sweden, the same pattern is clear. In the surveys for the 2002, 2006 and 2010 elections, there was a clear difference between the left-wing voters and those of the centre-right. The difference appears to have been larger in the 2002 election than in later elections, but it is still present in the most recent elections (Holmberg and Oscarsson 2004: 171; 2008: 260; 2011b: 73). Answering the question “do you think it’s a good idea to accept fewer refugees in Sweden?” in 2010, an average of 20% of the left’s electorate agreed, while the number for the voters of the right is 29%. If the anti-immigration party, the Swedish Democrats are included, the number drastically rises for the right, to an average of 40% (Holmberg and Oscarsson 2011b: 73).

As demonstrated here, voters of parties on the left-wing of Scandinavian politics tend to view immigration more favourably than voters of the centre-right. While the evidence is mostly collected from elections in the past decade, it seems that the difference has decreased to some extent in the latest elections. According to partisan theory, this should be reflected in policy.

This effect is also reflected in the differing ideologies of the two party blocks, illustrated by their voting share of the immigrant population. Across Europe, including Scandinavia, migrants largely vote for parties to the left (Andersen and Hoff 2001: 234-235; Messina 2007: 203). This is true to such an extent that Saggat (2000) refers to it as an ‘iron law’. For instance, in the Norwegian elections in 2011, 67% of immigrants preferred the parties to the left¹⁵, in contrast to 37% of the population as a whole. This effect is driven mainly by those who are admitted on family reunification and, most importantly, by refugees (Berg et al. 2012).

¹⁵ In this survey, the parties to the left were defined as the Labour Party, the Socialist Left and the Red Electoral Alliance.

Immigrants' support for left-leaning parties shows that these parties are likely to have better policies for this group. This is argued by Messina (2007: 205), who claims that the support given by immigrants is not primarily due to the migrants' class background. He receives empirical support for this argument in a recent case study of Norway by Bergh and Bjørklund (2011). Immigrants exhibit a large degree of so-called 'group-voting', meaning that they vote according to their identity as a social and ethnic group and as immigrants, and not based on such factors as social background and ideology. An immigrant is likely to vote according to his or her status as an immigrant, even if this experience is untypical of that immigrant minority (Bergh and Bjørklund 2011: 309, 313, 324). Messina (2007: 209), along with Bergh and Bjørklund (2011), argue that this support from the immigrant group stems from the fact that the parties to the left are more inclined to embrace immigrants and minority groups than are those on the right. Specifically, the left-leaning parties, due to their historical trajectory and progressive ideological orientation, advance migrants' collective interests to a much larger extent than do the parties to the right (Bergh and Bjørklund 2013: 78; Messina 2007: 209).

Traditionally, the parties on the left flank have placed great importance on international solidarity and commitment to peoples and countries in struggle. The left's emphasis on full employment, universal healthcare, socioeconomic equality and a solid public educational system intersects with the aspirations of immigrants who are often socioeconomically disadvantaged (Messina 2007: 208). In contrast, the centre-right has placed greater importance upon the individual, the status-quo and less influence by the state on the individual. This does not fit as well with the larger immigrant communities and their tendency to vote as a group. Solidarity and foreign aid is also important to the centre-right, it has not shaped the parties in the same manner as it has the parties of the left. While this argument is a simplification of the different parties in the three Scandinavian countries, particularly those of the centre, it also reflects a general difference between the ideology of the left and that of the centre-right, which is important when the parties are analysed in relation to the governments they have formed.

A last point to consider is the fact that the large support for parties on the left by immigrants and refugees, also makes them a part of the lefts' constituency. According to partisan theory, the composition of its electorate is very important for its policies. However, this is only reasonable if this part of the constituency also view immigration favourably, and if they are large enough in numbers for politicians to take action upon their views. Both of these assumptions are questionable. There appears to exist no studies on the issue preference

of immigrants in Scandinavia. Moreover, immigrants are only a sizeable portion of the population in the larger cities in Scandinavia, such as Malmö, Copenhagen, Stockholm and Oslo. However, it is still reasonable to assume that if immigrants do have specific preference toward asylum policy and if the left should view them as a valuable portion of the electorate, both these factors should influence policies in a direction favourable to asylum seekers. First, there is evidence from Norway that immigrants are more concerned with immigration issues than other voters (Bergh and Bjørklund 2013: 77). If immigrants who considered immigration to be important, wished to restrict immigration, a natural consequence would be that they voted for anti-immigration parties to a larger extent as well. However, election surveys show that they vote for such parties to a much smaller degree than the native population (Bergh and Bjørklund 2013: 51, 54). Moreover, in relation to the importance placed upon immigrants as a voter group by politicians, these indications provide two options for the left: their politicians will either ignore them, or they will view the support as valuable and therefore seek to increase, not decrease, their numbers. If there should be any effect of the voting patterns of immigrants in Scandinavia, it should therefore be positive, particularly for the positions of the left.

The three arguments presented here, namely the opinions of the parties' electorate, the voting patterns of immigrants and refugees and the ideology of the political parties, all point in the same direction. Voters for parties on the left-wing of Scandinavian politics tend to view immigration more favourably than voters of the right. The ideology of the left is more favourable to immigrants and asylum seekers than that of the right. Immigrants and refugees largely vote for the parties of the left, making them a part of the left's constituency and a source of support (Schain 2008). This should increase the incentive for having a liberal asylum policy for the left. Combined, this make for a difference in recognition rates between centre-right governments and left-leaning governments. Recognition rates should be higher under left-leaning governments than under centre-right governments.

H1: Recognition rates under left-wing governments will be higher than under centre-right governments

3.3.2 The anti-immigration parties

Another interesting aspect of politics' effect on recognition rates is the role of parties that have a restrictive immigration and asylum policy as one of their central aims. Parties that fit

this description in Scandinavia are the Norwegian Progress Party, the Danish Peoples Party and the Sweden Democrats (Jupskås 2012: 28-32). In addition, two largely disappeared parties, the Danish Progress Party and the New Democracy party of Sweden also fit such a description. The development of anti-immigration parties in Scandinavia began in the early 1970's, with the establishment of the Progress Party in Denmark, and later, in Norway. While originally anti-tax parties with a neo-liberal message, their profile changed with the large increase of asylum seekers in the 1980's (Andersen and Bjørklund 2007: 2-3, 7). In Sweden, New Democracy was established on an anti-immigration platform in the end of the 1980s. However, their success was only short-lived and they disappeared after a few years. Since then, there has largely been an absence of an anti-immigration party in Sweden (Andersen and Bjørklund 2007: 4-5) up until the breakthrough of the Sweden Democrats in the 2010 election (Jupskås 2012: 100). This party, however, has a closer link to extremism than the anti-immigration parties in Norway and Denmark (Andersen and Bjørklund 2007: 5), an image they have tried to distance themselves from in recent years (Green-Pedersen and Odum 2008: 375). The main issue for the anti-immigration parties has been to promote a restrictive immigration platform, but also to market themselves on welfare issues (Andersen and Bjørklund 2007: 11; Jupskås 2012: 30). They have gained momentum in both Norway and Denmark, and, with few exceptions, only increased their support since the mid 1980's (Andersen and Bjørklund 2007: 7).

The effect of this increase in support for anti-immigration parties may be a change in the asylum policy of the other parties. Importantly, partisan theory only focuses on parties who are in government. None of the anti-immigration parties in Scandinavia have ever been in government. The Danish People's Party have been close, acting as a formal support party for the conservative government from 2001 to 2011 (Jupskås 2012: 89). However, partisan theory also argues that political parties will seek to satisfy their electorate and to gain re-election. As the anti-immigration parties' popularity has risen, the established parties may have changed their policies in order to prevent a loss of voters to these parties. The anti-immigration parties affect the electorate of both the centre-right and the left, and they draw a substantial amount of voters from both sides (Schain 2008: 469). Still, as partisan theory also emphasises the importance of loyalty to party ideology, a change in policies due to the rise of anti-immigration parties should not be expected to result in any radical change. Therefore, a difference between the parties should still be expected. However, the theory also claims that parties will enact the policies they were elected on, and which their voters support. If a number of voters appear to change parties, the party may shift their immigration policy, but

without making a radical change in conflict with their ideology. Hence, whilst the anti-immigration parties have never been in government in Scandinavia, they may still have affected recognition rates.

There is some qualitative evidence that such a shift in policy has occurred in Scandinavia due to the rise of the anti-immigration parties. Green-Pedersen and Odmalm (2008: 378) argue that the rise of the Progress Party and the Danish People's Party made it possible for the right in Denmark to seek new cooperation partners and together argue for a more restrictive stance on immigration. This has in turn also made the Social Democrats turn more restrictive as well (Bale et al. 2010: 415). In Sweden, the centre-right focused on a restrictive approach to the immigration issue in the 2002 election campaign, partly to keep the Sweden Democrats from monopolizing the issue (Ljunggren 2003, as cited in Green-Pedersen and Odmalm 2008: 376). For Norway, the debate over immigration came with the Progress Party and has subsequently also been shaped by it as the topic has become much more politicised (Hagelund 2003). In terms of government formation, it appears that the rise of the Progress Party has been more of a problem for the Conservatives than for the Social Democrats, as they have brought the left-wing closer together, whilst splitting the centre-right (Bale et al. 2010: 417-419). Still, the fact that the Progress Party has taken voters from the Social Democrats' electorate in Norway is clear (Hagelund 2003: 47). Both the Progress party in Norway and the Danish People's Party have marketed themselves as welfare-parties, that "carry the legacy of the classical Social Democracy" (Andersen and Bjørklund 2007: 11). In so doing, they have developed into important parties for many in the working-class (Andersen and Bjørklund 2007: 17). Therefore, the Progress Party may have influenced policies of both the Social Democrats and the Conservative party.

On the basis of these arguments, a negative effect of anti-immigration parties on recognition rates should be expected.

H2: Increased support for anti-immigration parties will decrease recognition rates

3.3.3 The effect of persecution and conflict in the country of origin

As previously explained, the conventions the Scandinavian countries are part to and which form the legal basis for their recognition of refugee, should in theory result in relatively similar recognition rates for asylum seekers from the same countries. In light of partisan theory, this thesis hypothesizes that politics matter in determining the outcome of asylum

applications. However, this in itself does not establish *how* politics manifests itself in the assessment of asylum applications.

Consider the following. Denmark and Sweden both receive applications from 100 persons, 50 of whom are from countries with a high level of persecution and conflict and 50 of whom are from countries with a low level of such problems. In the first scenario, Sweden recognizes 40 refugees from the countries in a high persecution/conflict situation and 20 from non-troubled countries, while Denmark recognizes 20 persons from persecution/conflict countries and 10 from a non-troubled country. The overall recognition rates will be 50% lower in Denmark than in Sweden, but the difference between persecution/conflict countries and non-troubled countries is identical. Their overall policy is just more or less strict. In the second scenario, Sweden and Denmark will both recognize 40 refugees from countries with a high degree of persecution/conflict, but Sweden will also recognize 20 persons from non-troubled countries, whilst Denmark will recognize none. Hence, Denmark will have a lower recognition rate for persons from non-conflict countries but not for those from countries with persecution/conflict. In this instance, asylum seekers in Denmark have a lower likelihood of gaining asylum only if they are not from a country with a high level of persecution and conflict.

These two scenarios may both be the effect of different policies in the two countries, as politicians wish to maintain or restrict the number of asylum seekers. A government may either limit the number of admitted asylum seekers through a specific assessment of the conditions in countries with certain characteristics, or direct the interpretation of the law in a more liberal or restrictive direction in general. If politicians are committed to reducing the number of asylum seekers, it seems reasonable to assume that they will wish to do so as a general policy instead of targeting certain countries. However, it may be more difficult to do so if the asylum seekers are from countries in a well-known conflict situation. Large-scale conflicts often receive a great deal of media attention, more so than countries where more subtle forms of abuses are commonplace. For instance, the present conflict in Syria has caused media in all three Scandinavian countries to investigate how many refugees the countries are accepting from Syria. This may also coincide with the fact that it is easier to put faith in a story of persecution in a high-conflict country, than in one where such abuses occur, but are not as widespread. If the threshold for granting asylum is high, persons from such countries may have an easier time “proving” their story. Therefore, if the policy of the government is to reduce the number of persons granted refugee status, they may not be as successful in doing so for those from countries in a large-scale conflict. Hence, in a country

with a stricter asylum policy, the effect of the persecution and conflict in a country will be much greater than in countries with a more liberal policy.

How does this play out for the three Scandinavian countries? Gudbrandsen (2013: 27-28) has collected data on asylum policy changes in Scandinavia up until 2010.¹⁶ These point to a pattern where Denmark has gone further in a restrictive direction than the two other Scandinavian countries. Since 1995, there have been 10 major policy changes in Norway. Five of these have been in a restrictive direction, whilst five have been in a more liberal direction. Hence, there is no clear pattern for the direction of the policy changes in Norway. For Sweden, only two of the seven policy changes recorded have been in a more restrictive direction. The legislation has mostly gone in a neutral or more liberal direction. Denmark has seen fewer policy changes, but in return, all of them have been in a more restrictive direction. Moreover, contrary to popular belief, these changes did not solely come after the Conservative government took office in the early 2000's. Denmark began restricting their policies several years earlier (Gudbrandsen 2013: 16). This policy development in Scandinavia is also apparent from Hatton's (2009: 200) index on asylum policy from 1997 to 2006, where Denmark is deemed to be more restrictive than the two other countries in as early as 1997 and also in 2006. Norway has followed suit and was somewhat more restrictive in 2006 than they were in 1997, according to Hatton. Lastly, Sweden was more liberal in 2006 than they were in 1997. The changes in asylum policy have caused Denmark to currently have one of Europe's most restrictive asylum policies, whilst Sweden has one of the most liberal policies. Norway is somewhere in between (Brochmann and Hagelund 2011: 13; Gudbrandsen 2013: 2). As Denmark has attempted to restrict their asylum policies to a larger extent than the two other Scandinavian countries, it is reasonable to assume that this will also cause differences in who is admitted under the Refugee Convention. In accordance with the arguments above, Denmark, which has focused the most on restricting its asylum policies, should see the highest impact of persecution and conflict.

H3: The level of persecution and conflict in a country of origin increases the likelihood of refugee recognition, but more so for Denmark than for Norway and Sweden.

¹⁶ This includes the supplementary status.

4 Research design

4.1 Choice of cases

This study limits itself to the Scandinavian countries. I will briefly address my motivation to study these countries in particular. The focus of my thesis has been limited to a smaller number of countries, as it has been necessary to collect and code parts of the data myself.¹⁷ The decision to focus on the Scandinavian countries is due to both practical and theoretical reasons. The Scandinavian countries share a similar history, political development and socioeconomic standard. In that sense, this thesis employs a ‘most similar systems design’, where the cases chosen are similar in most respects, but differ on the variable of interest (Gerring 2007: 131). In this case the variable of interest is recognition rates. The advantage of such a design is that many potentially disturbing variables are held constant, for instance political development or culture, in this context (Gerring 2007: 133). Moreover, the Scandinavian countries employ the exact same definition of a refugee in their national laws, which is a prerequisite for a study of why recognition rates are so different.

Also, the Scandinavian countries are fit for a study of partisan influences. It may not appear so at first, as the Scandinavian tradition of largely consensual politics and the large coalitions and minority governments (Damgaard 2011: 68) would seem to reduce the possibility of partisan influence. However, the region also boasts a highly centralized state, economic resources and very few majoritarian constraints, which in turn increase the likelihood of partisan effects (Gudbrandsen 2010: 249; Schmidt 1996: 156, 170). The Scandinavian countries thereby represent a middle ground in terms of the possible effects of partisan influence, and they may give an indication of how politics influence recognition rates for countries in general. However, as the study is limited to three countries, clear conclusions cannot be drawn for a larger number of countries.¹⁸

There are also a number of practical reasons for my selection of the Scandinavian countries. Because the starting point of this thesis is the apparent gap between the expected similarity of recognition rates and the reality of very different rates between the countries, it is important to determine to what extent national legislation is similar. As I am able to understand the Scandinavian languages, this task is easier than if other world regions were

¹⁷ I elaborate on this point under Section 4.4.

¹⁸ This point is further discussed in Section 4.2

chosen. Also, as the focus of the thesis is three countries, there is a substantial opportunity to go further in-depth, where knowledge of the Scandinavian languages can only be considered an asset, particularly in order to study national sources and their Foreign Aliens Laws. Lastly, the Scandinavian countries also maintain a high quality of their public data, which are used for a number of variables in this study.

4.2 The case for a statistical analysis

In order to provide a valid explanation to the problems or puzzle presented in a research project, the researcher must choose a research design that is suited to answer the questions posed. This is one of the most important decisions the researcher is faced with, as it has important consequences for the conclusions and inferences the researcher may draw (Gerring 2007: 38; Keohane et al. 1994: 3-4). The starting point of my research is the puzzling difference between recognition rates for asylum seekers from the same countries, which I have chosen to analyse by way of statistical analysis of a smaller number of countries. As such, I am able to draw firm conclusions, but only for Scandinavia.

There are, of course, multiple other ways such a puzzle may have been analysed. For instance, an alternative to this research design is to analyse the case documents of one group of asylum seekers of the same nationality in each of the Scandinavian countries. Such a study would no doubt have contributed to the understanding of the mechanisms leading to such different recognition rates. The largest advantage of such a study would be that it would have access to individual data. As individual merit must be expected to be the most important factor in the assessment of asylum applications, there is some variation that is impossible to measure with aggregated data such as mine. At the same time, this study employs a number of indicators of conditions at the country-level. This is likely to average-out the effect of individual merit, as the merit of an asylum claim is likely to vary both within and across countries. In addition, because there are few studies of recognition rates, it would have been difficult for the study in this example to ensure that the relevant variables were taken into account, particularly those of the political dimension. Of course, such an objection may also be directed at my research design, but it is easier to ensure this in a quantitative design than in a smaller-scope qualitative design simply because the qualitative design will look at fewer variables.

Another alternative is to interview case handlers and politicians of their view on the influence politics plays in recognition rates. A study of this kind might have been able to

draw more firm conclusions about the causal mechanisms through which politics can influence recognition rates, but it would be difficult to establish whether or not the findings actually corresponded with increases or decreases in the origin-specific recognition rates over time.

Clearly, there is a trade-off between having a wider scope and going more in-depth to investigate the specific causal mechanisms that may be in play. This is a general trade-off between qualitative and quantitative studies. My research design draws from both type of study. The choice of a statistical analysis with a limited number of countries has its natural disadvantages. While I may find a pattern for the Scandinavian region, it may be that the pattern does not hold each country separately. There is always a risk of the effects of variables being very different in one country.¹⁹ At the same time, this will also be the case for studies that include a larger number of countries, since there is no guarantee that a general pattern will occur in every country. The advantage of a large-N study is that it provides more general inferences. I will not be able to draw generalizations beyond Scandinavia as the analysis is based on only three destination countries. Other countries may differ from the cases studied here on important variables, making such inferences problematic (Bennett and George 2005: 110). At the same time, my generalizations will be made at a lower level of abstraction and the assumptions and indicators may be less crude than what is often the case in statistical analysis when such assumptions need to be made for a large number of cases. Still, I cannot escape such problems completely. For instance, I create a persecution/conflict index to tap into characteristics of the Refugee Convention. This is of course more abstract than analysing individual data, but, as mentioned above, individual merit is likely to be averaged out by the use of detailed country-level data.

The advantage of my own research design is that I am able to combine a statistical analysis with supplements of country-specific information, thereby drawing on some of the advantages of small-N research often seen in qualitative studies. I consider this research design to be more apt to provide clues into what may influence recognition rates across the Scandinavian countries and across the origin countries of asylum seekers, than what a qualitative design alone would have been able to. While a statistical analysis with more countries of destination would surely also have provided many interesting findings, an in-depth comparison between countries such as what is done in my study, would have been

¹⁹ I separate the analysis for the variable where this is most likely to be the case, namely influence of anti-immigration parties. See Section 6.1 for a further explanation and the result of the estimation for only Denmark and Norway.

much more difficult. As the factors that determine recognition rates are still uncertain, I deem such a combination of qualitative and quantitative advantages to be a fitting research design.

4.3 The case for a dyadic research design

For my analysis, I employ a dyadic research design, in which recognition rates are specific to both origin country and destination country. Hence, there is one observation for the recognition rate for each origin country to each destination country in a given year. Such a design is used by Neumayer (2005a), and it has two important advantages.

First, as mentioned in the literature review, some of the research on recognition rates ignores the fact that countries of destination receive asylum seekers from different countries. For instance, while Sweden has experienced a large increase in the number of Syrian asylum seekers during the current civil war, there are still relatively few Syrians who apply in Norway (Slettholm 2012). Norway and Sweden have in turn received many applications from Eritrea while Denmark has not (Brekke 2012: 3). This difference in the origin country of applicants creates a problem when investigating the sources of differing recognition rates, as the merit of the asylum claims lodged is likely to vary with origin country (Neumayer 2005a: 50). A country of destination may simply experience a decrease in their recognition rate because the composition of asylum seekers in the country changed and not due to a change in policy. In order to properly analyse the determinants and variation in recognition rates across countries, such an effect needs to be taken into account. This is done by the use of origin-specific recognition rates in each destination country.

Second, by employing such a design it is also possible to estimate the effect of the characteristics of origin countries on recognition rates, as recognition rates are specific to origin country (Neumayer 2005a: 50). An analysis of these factors is not possible without including the country of origin of the applicants. This research design thereby allows me to both control for the possible effects of origin-specific factors in my analysis of the political influence on recognition rates and also estimate potential differences in the evaluation of the merit of the asylum claim between the Scandinavian countries.

4.4 The dataset and unit of analysis

As I employ a dyadic research design, each observation in the dataset is for a specific origin country, a specific destination country and a specific year, hence the dataset is structured as dyad-years. Recognition rates that are specific to both origin country and destination country

are not easily available. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (henceforth UNHCR) has previously been the most common source of data on recognition rates. However, while the organization usually collects origin and destination specific recognition rates, it stopped doing so in 2000, and resumed this practice only in 2006. Moreover, these recognition rates are only available for recent years if the number of asylum seekers exceeded a certain amount, thereby excluding a number of countries. This has resulted in a current lack of data to complete a study involving a dyadic research design and also to conduct such a study of a larger number of countries.

In order to overcome these difficulties, I have collected data for Norway, Sweden and Denmark directly from the respective immigration authorities of each country²⁰ for the years 2000—2011²¹. Mostly, these data were given in the form of yearly reports, which did not explicitly contain the recognition rate. Hence, I calculated the recognition rates myself, based on its definition as the number of persons granted refugee status divided by the number of decisions, for applicants from a given country in that year. The question of which categories of asylum seekers should be included, was determined by an evaluation of whether or not the immigration authorities specifically evaluated the merit of the asylum claim in relation to the Refugee Convention. Only in these cases can the effect of national politics on the decisions of the immigration authority be evaluated. In practice, this implied that those who applied for refugee status, but instead were given some other supplementary status, were included in the calculation along with those whose claim was rejected all together. At the same time, those who fall under the Dublin Convention provisions and are therefore sent to other European countries, as well as all of those who were recognized refugees by UNHCR and admitted to the Scandinavian countries on a set quota, are excluded from the analysis. In these cases, the immigration authorities make no evaluation of whether or not the asylum seeker should be recognized as a refugee.

This dataset was then combined with that of Neumayer (2005a) in order to expand the time frame of the analysis. Neumayer's data stems from UNHCR, who receive their data from immigration authorities in each country. In using his data I add the years 1995 to 1999 to my analysis. Originally, his dataset comprised the years 1980 to 1999, but I have decided to exclude most of these years. This exclusion was necessary for two reasons. First, many of the earliest years were missing for one or more of the Scandinavian countries. Second, the

²⁰ The Norwegian Directorate of Immigration, the Danish Immigration Service and the Swedish Migration Board.

²¹ For Denmark: 2001-2011.

data up until 1995 seem erroneous. Denmark appeared to have recognized all asylum seekers in the early 1990's, while Sweden had no recognition rates of zero in the same time period. As it appears from data on asylum applications in these countries, numerous countries are not included in Neumayer's dataset. Considering such errors, an inclusion of these years would have biased my results and for this reason, I include only the years from 1995 to 1999, where the data appear to be correct. There is no guarantee that these data have been collected in the same way as I have coded mine, but the definition of the dependent variable is identical in the two datasets and they should therefore be sufficiently similar for the purpose of this thesis.

As the dataset includes all available recognition rates for the Scandinavian countries in the time period 1995-2011, it is not a sample. This has important consequences for which inferences I will make, as I will not draw conclusions for a larger amount of data for the Scandinavian countries. Instead, the study can draw inferences on the likelihood of an asylum seeker from a given country being granted refugee status, both now and in the future.

4.4.1 Possible data problems

Neumayer (2005a: 51) reports two main problems associated with his dataset. First, some of the countries in his analysis have reported the combined recognition rate for both first-instance and appeal decisions, whereas other countries only include first-instance decisions. In the part of the dataset that I have coded myself, I run into a similar problem for Sweden in the years 2000-2007. The Swedish Migration Board reports the number of recognized refugees based on both decisions by them, the first-instance, and the appeals instance, combined. The number of rejected asylum applications is only based on those assessed by the first-instance. This is a reason for concern, as it may cause the number of recognized refugees in these years to be artificially high, although few cases are usually overturned by the appeals instance. I test for the possibility that this affects my results in the robustness analysis (see Section 6.1). I find that this time period is not significantly different from other periods and thereby does not distort my results.

Second, Neumayer also reports that there are differences in the assessment of which categories of asylum seekers should be included in the recognition rate. Some countries include those who are rejected on formal grounds, meaning there has been no evaluation of whether or not the asylum seeker should be granted asylum, whilst others do not. Those that include rejections on formal grounds are likely to have lower recognition rates than those who do not include such applications. Neumayer does not mention which countries this

pertains to and so I do not know whether or not these problems are present in my own dataset. As a matter of precaution then, I use dummy variables for each Scandinavian country, to control for both the issues mentioned by Neumayer.

4.4.2 The possibility of selection bias

A second danger is the possible presence of selection bias. This occurs if any of the criteria for selection correlate with the observed variables (Keohane et al. 1994: 223). A risk of selection bias is present in nearly all studies and mine is no exception. There are two ways in which such a bias can be a problem for my study.

First, there may be a bias in the sample of people who seek asylum. The problem may be, for example, that the population in countries with the highest level of persecution and conflict are unable to flee and travel to Europe to seek asylum. For instance, considering the level of human rights abuses in North Korea, there are very few refugees from the country. Similarly, in the most extreme conflicts, people may be admitted to Scandinavia through UNHCR and do not apply themselves. This excludes them from the analysis, as I only include asylum seekers who are evaluated by the destination countries' authorities. Denmark admits 500 of such refugees, Norway admits 1500 and Sweden admits between 1500 and 2000 each year. Instances of both these cases would imply that the extreme values of some of the independent variables are not represented, thereby decreasing their variance. However, when investigating the data, it does appear that there are countries present with extreme values on the independent variables, such as the current state of affairs in Somalia and Syria or Bosnia-Herzegovina in the 1990's. Still, a certain bias may be present.

A second source of selection bias would appear if asylum seekers from the same country do not have a roughly similar merit of their application; in other words, if individual traits that are unobserved, correlate with the destination country dummy variables. This would occur if, say, Iraqis in Denmark have a more legitimate claim to protection than Iraqis in Sweden. Such a situation would cause biased results, as part of the discrepancy in recognition rates would be caused by the individual merit of each asylum claim and this factor would not be distributed evenly between destination countries. However, in order for such a situation to have an impact on the results of the analysis, there must be a general pattern in that, for instance, one country has a overall higher level of asylum seekers with high merit applications than another. In order for such a situation to occur, asylum seekers

would have to choose where to apply for asylum based on knowledge of the merit of their own asylum claim.

According to the qualitative study by Robinson and Segrott (2002), most asylum seekers do not know much about seeking asylum, the procedures it involves or the reason why they should be granted refugee status or not. In their study, most respondents say they assumed they would be granted asylum easily. The knowledge some of them did have were mostly rumours that in some countries it was easier to be granted asylum for someone with their nationality (Robinson and Segrott 2002: 43-44, 46-47). In my analysis, this would channel asylum seekers from certain countries to apply for asylum in one of the Scandinavian countries, rather than the others. This is certainly the case to some extent, but it is taken into account by the use of origin and destination specific recognition rates, as explained above. While one should not underestimate the importance of decisions made by asylum seekers, it seems unreasonable to assume that they should have the resources to both evaluate whether they fulfil the criteria in the Refugee Convention and that they are able to go to where they believe their specific case will have the highest merit. Often, an agent who is paid to handle the asylum seekers' travel is instrumental in establishing where they end up seeking asylum (Robinson and Segrott 2002: 20). The extent of the information most asylum seekers have appear to be limited to where persons from the same origin country may have the highest chance of gaining asylum in general. I therefore do not consider this an important source of bias.

4.5 Dependent variable

The dependent variable is defined as the number of asylum seekers granted asylum in any one year relative to the number of asylum claims decided upon for applicants from the same country. Hence, the variable does not measure the rate of successful applicants in a year, but rather the rate of successful decisions (Neumayer 2005a: 51). This is because applications are not always decided upon in the same year in which they were filed, and there is no way of knowing when the applications decided upon were actually lodged. Still, this measure is more precise as the situation in the country of origin is evaluated at the time the application is decided upon and not when it was submitted.

Table 4.1 shows a random sample of 20 observations from the original dataset. It shows the recognition rate, origin country, destination country and year. Summary statistics of the dependent variable are shown in Table A.2 of the appendix.

Table 4.1. Sample of recognition rates for the dyad origin country – destination country. Sorted by year.

Origin country	Destination country	Year	Recognition rate
Sierra Leone	Denmark	1995	0.0833
Mauritania	Sweden	1995	0
Kenya	Sweden	1995	0.109
Guatemala	Sweden	1996	0
Myanmar (Burma)	Norway	1996	0.800
Belarus	Sweden	1998	0.194
Ukraine	Sweden	1998	0.177
Bangladesh	Denmark	1999	0
Bosnia and Hercegovina	Sweden	2002	0.00166
Sudan	Sweden	2002	0
Madagascar	Sweden	2006	0
Russia	Norway	2006	0.0385
Ghana	Denmark	2007	0
Iraq	Norway	2008	0.0753
South Korea	Sweden	2009	0
Kazakhstan	Norway	2009	0
Egypt	Norway	2010	0.130
Uzbekistan	Norway	2010	0
Afghanistan	Sweden	2011	0.197
Mali	Sweden	2011	0.250

4.6 Independent variables

In this section, I describe the independent variables used in the analysis. I begin with the variables that concern the countries of destination, namely government and the anti-immigration parties. I go on to describe each of the variables included in the persecution/conflict index for countries of origin, before turning to the control variables. I include plots that illustrate the development of each variable in the time period analysed.

A problem with some of the variables included is that the causality between them and recognition rates may run both ways. Such a problem is called endogeneity bias, and it occurs

if any of the independent variables used are correlated with the error term. In general, this will affect the estimates of the coefficients produced in the regression, as the estimation procedure will assign some of the variation on the dependent variable to the independent variables, while in reality, this variation is caused by the error term (Kennedy 2008: 138). By using past values of the independent variables thought to be endogenous to the dependent variable, this reverse causality is controlled for.

4.6.1 Independent variables for destination countries

Government

I measure partisan influence on recognition rates by a dichotomy indicating what kind of parties were in government each year. Centre-right governments are given the value 0 and left-leaning governments the value 1. For years of elections that resulted in a change in government, I code according to which bloc held power for most of the year. As most government shifts occurred in autumn, a few months' time lag is incorporated for close to all years. Table 4.2 shows the list of government shifts²² included in the analysis.

As shown here, Sweden, Norway and Denmark have had a left-leaning government for 12, 11 and 7 of the 17 years included in the analysis, respectively. A problematic fact is that there is only one government shift between centre/right and left-leaning governments in both Sweden and Denmark. A few more shifts would of course have been desirable, in order to more securely estimate the effect of such a shift. However, as explained earlier, the dataset cannot be extended, and the reality of few governmental shifts in Sweden and Denmark can certainly not be altered. Instead, I include fixed effects for time in order to make sure that the government variables do not pick up an effect of a variation over time. This will contribute to securing a more reliable estimate for government shifts.

²² I include any shift where there has been a change of parties in government.

Table 4.2. Scandinavian governments from 1995-2011.

Government formed	Country	Government	Left-leaning
3 rd November 1990	Norway	Labour Party	1
27 th September 1994	Denmark	Social Democrats, Danish Social Liberal Party, Centre Democrats	1
7 th October 1994	Sweden	Social Democrats	1
30 th December 1996	Denmark	Social Democrats, Danish Social Liberal Party	1
17 th October 1997	Norway	Christian Democrats, Liberal Party, Centre Party	0
17 th March 2000	Norway	Labour Party	1
19 th October 2001	Norway	Conservatives, Christian Democrats, The Liberal Party	0
27 th November 2001	Denmark	Venstre, Conservative People's Party	0
17 th October 2005	Norway	Labour Party, Socialist Left Party, Centre Party	1
6 th October 2006	Sweden	Moderate Party, Centre Party, Liberal People's Party, Christian Democrats	0

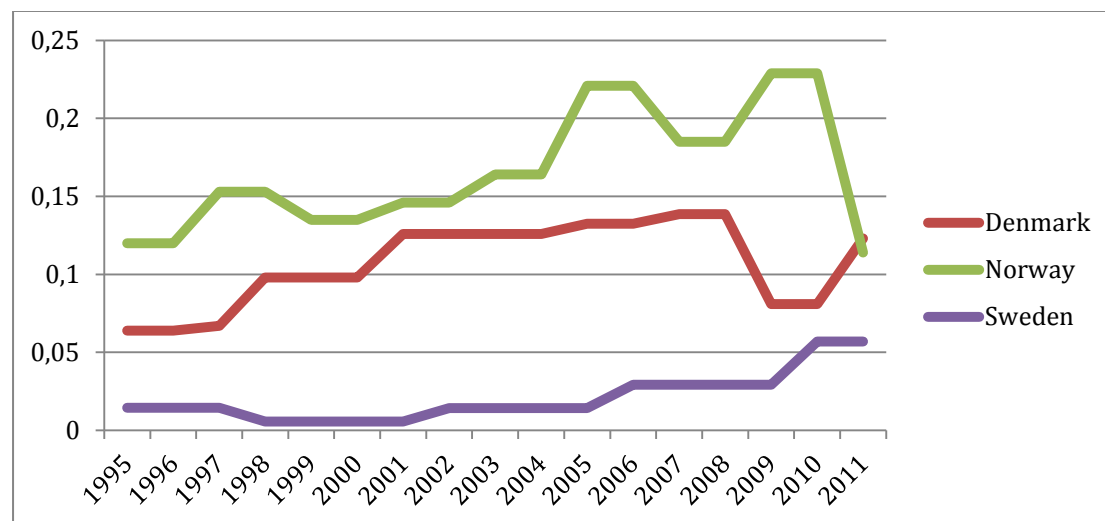
Anti-Immigration parties

I measure the effect of the anti-immigration parties on recognition rates by their share of votes in both local and national parliamentary elections²³. These parties are expected to influence recognition rates more indirectly, through a change in the policy of the other parties as a result of increasing voter support for anti-immigration parties (see Figure 4.1). Such a change in policy is likely to occur as a result of local elections as well as national elections, as both are indicators of the popular support for the anti-immigration parties' policy. A substantial advantage to including local elections is that this increases the variance of the variable, making it easier to detect a pattern. However, this does not hold for all three countries. In Sweden, local and national elections are held at the same time. I therefore only

²³ An alternative solution would have been to use survey data, which are more frequent and thereby provides more variance for this variable. However, support for these parties has been severely underestimated in such surveys. Moreover, this underestimation varies over time, making it more fruitful to measure the parties' electoral strength (Gudbrandsen 2013: 13).

use national elections for Sweden. In Denmark, national elections may be called by the prime minister, which has caused certain local elections to occur in the same year as national elections. I prioritize national elections in such instances. For these reasons, the dataset contains a differing number of elections for the three countries. There are nine registered elections in the time period for Norway, seven elections for Denmark and five for Sweden. This is of course problematic, but as the alternative would be to decrease the number of elections for Norway and Denmark, which would make it harder to pick up an effect, I choose to use both local and national elections. There is a possible problem of endogeneity in this variable, since high recognition rates may also increase support for anti-immigration parties. In order to control for this possibility, the variable in the statistical analysis is lagged by three years.

Figure 4.1. Rate of electoral support for anti-immigration parties in Norway, Sweden and Denmark.



Data compiled from numerous sources: Statistics Norway (2009), Progress Party (2013), Buch (2001: 69), Andersen (2006: 3), Danish Ministry of the Interior and Social Affairs (2009: 11), Statistics Sweden (2006), Andersen and Bjørklund (2007: 7) and Sweden Democrats (2012).

The data for this variable stems from multiple sources. The reason for this is that there are often different sources for the local and the national election results, and some sources do not exist for the entire time period covered in this analysis. The data concerning Denmark comes from Buch (2001: 69) Andersen (2006: 3) and a report by the Danish Ministry of the Interior and Social Affairs (2009: 11). The data for Norway was gathered from Statistics Norway (2009), Bjørklund and Andersen (2007: 7) and the web page of the Progress Party

(2013) for the most recent results. The Swedish election results are from Statistics Sweden (2006) for the most recent election results, from Bjørklund and Andersen (2007: 7) for the support for New Democracy, and from the web page of the Sweden Democrats (2012) for this party's election results. The reason for supplement of the last two sources is that the electoral result of these two parties in some years was too small to feature in the general statistics of Statistics Sweden.

4.6.2 Independent variables for origin countries

The Refugee Convention is the most important legal document when granting refugee status. As previously discussed, the convention provides a definition of a refugee, which is incorporated directly in all the Scandinavian countries' legislation. This definition is therefore essential when attempting to operationalize reasons for granting someone asylum.

Under the Refugee Convention a refugee is a person

”who owing to wellfounded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it” (The Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees 1951 Art 1(A)).

While data on individual applicants would have been the best way to assess whether or not the Scandinavian countries differ in their overall assessment of asylum applications, access to such data is rare. I therefore use data for individuals aggregated over the countries of origin of the asylum seekers as a measurement of the extent to which the situation in the country matters when assessing the merit of an asylum claim. It is obvious that people from countries where torture and human rights abuses frequently occur, countries where there is a serious conflict which renders many in mortal danger, or countries where the state is unwilling or unable to protect their citizens (Noll 2000: 512) are more likely to be in need of protection than those who originate from democratic and free countries. Moreover, the phrase “wellfounded fear” implies both a subjective and an objective evaluation of the claim. While fear is subjective and specific to the individual in question, the fact that the fear needs to be wellfounded implies an evaluation of the conditions in the country where he or she is from

(United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees 1992). It is therefore not entirely unreasonable to use aggregated data for the purpose of this study.²⁴

I do this by constructing an index²⁵ of conditions in the country of origin that may be relevant for the assessment of the application according to the criteria in the Refugee Convention. By the use of different variables and measures, the combined result should be an index that taps into numerous reasons for a person's successful asylum application and hence, it may establish to what extent such conditions in the country of origin matters for the outcome of the application. I discuss the variables I have chosen to use below.

Human rights violations

To measure the level of human rights violations, I use the Political Terror Scale (PTS). The scale measures "violations of physical or personal integrity right carried out by a state (or its agents)" (Gibney and Wood 2010: 369). Specifically, this includes such violations as torture and other forms of physical abuse, extrajudicial killings, disappearances and political abuse. As the scale focuses on violations of a physical character, general political repression, without violence, will often not be captured in the scale (Gibney and Wood 2010: 369-370). This is not necessarily bad for the purpose of this study. The asylum seeker will most often have to be in physical danger in order to fulfil the criteria of the convention, though severe discrimination and restrictions will also fall under the definition (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees 1992). A greater drawback of the PTS is the fact that it focuses on state behaviour, and does not measure violence and discrimination from non-state actors, such as clans and insurgent groups (Gibney and Wood 2010: 370). However, if a person is threatened by such non-state actors and it is not "unreasonable" to ask him or her to reside in another part of the country, the criteria in the Refugee Convention are not fulfilled (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees 1992). Hence, while none-state actors are a serious threat and a measure of this would be ideal, the threat and lack of protection from the state may still a better indicator of those who have a right to asylum. In addition, I hope to correct for this problem by using a variable for state failure and for war, as explained below.

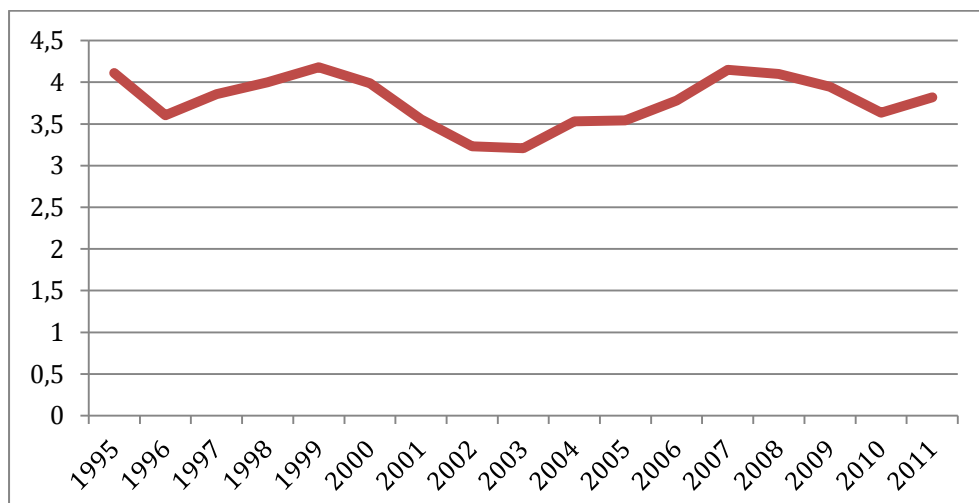
The data for the PTS comes from two sources: Amnesty International's "Annual Report" and the US Department of State's annual "Country Reports on Human Rights

²⁴ As long as unobserved individual traits do not correlate with the independent variables (see Section 4.4.2.

²⁵ The alternative would be to look at each variable separately. However, as the purpose of the study is to evaluate to what extent conditions in the country of origin as a whole matter when assessing asylum applications, each variable in itself will not provide this information.

Practices”. These reports are coded in two scales ranging from 1 to 5, where an increase implies a worsening of the political terror. I use the average of the Amnesty International scale and the State Department scale, as this involves greater precision in the assessment of the conditions in the country. The countries of origins’ average score of the PTS-scale appear to have varied greatly, and have not followed a clear pattern (see Figure 4.2).

Figure 4.2 The weighted²⁶ average score for countries of origin in the dataset on the political terror scale 1995-2011. Scale from 1-5.



Source: Cornett et al (2011).

Political oppression

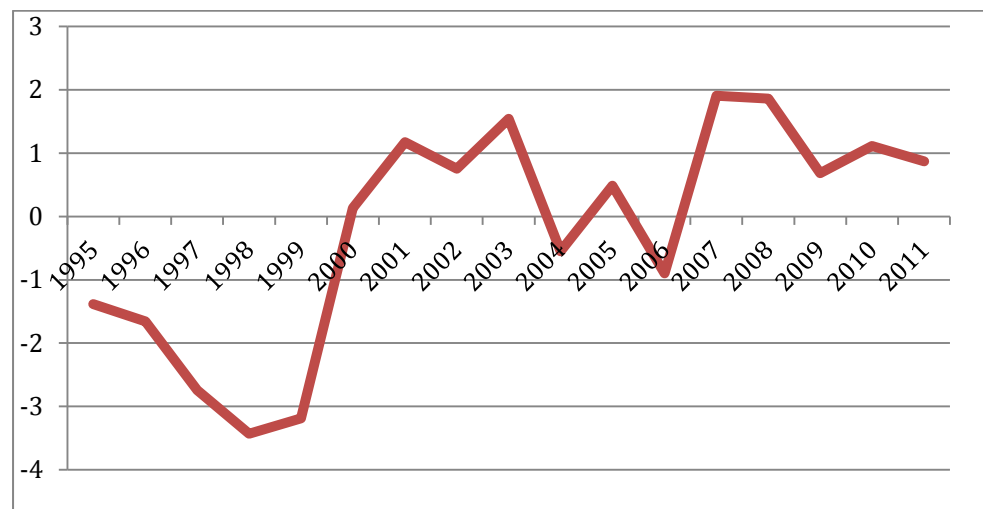
As a measure of political oppression, I use the Polity IV dataset’s “polity2” variable. This variable combines a democracy scale and an autocracy scale, which both go from 0 to 10, into an aggregated measure. The scale goes from -10 (strongly autocratic) to +10 (strongly democratic) (T. Gurr et al. 2011: 16-17). The level of democracy in the countries of origin has increased dramatically over time (see Figure 4.3). Specifically, it appears that most asylum seekers who arrived in Scandinavia from the early 2000’s onwards came from countries with a political system closer to a democracy than an autocracy, though only marginally. The measures of democracy and autocracy specifically focuses on the “competitiveness of political participation (...), the regulation of participation (...)”²⁷, the openness and competitiveness of executive recruitment (...), and constraints on the chief

²⁶ This implies that more weight is placed on scores for countries from which there are many asylum seekers in a given year, than what is placed on those from which there are few. The same tool is used in the main analysis and I explain why in Section 4.8.1.

²⁷ Only for the autocracy scale, not the democracy scale.

executive (...)” (T. Gurr et al. 2011: 16), using different weights²⁸. Hence, it emphasises measuring institutionalized democracy and not the civil liberties that often follow a development of democracy, such as the rule of law (T. Gurr et al. 2011: 14). The PTS should compensate for this problem, particularly for those who are persecuted for their political opinion, which is specifically mentioned in the Refugee Convention.

Figure 4.3. The weighted average level of democracy for countries of origin in the dataset, 1995-2011



Source: Gurr et al (2011).

Instances of war

I include three measures of war, in order to account for different situations which may render persons in mortal danger.

First, I use the UCDP/PRIO Armed Conflict Dataset. The dataset focuses on instances of armed conflict and defines this as “a contested incompatibility that concerns government and/or territory where the use of armed force between two parties, of which at least one is the government of a state, results in at least 25 battle-related deaths” (Themnér 2012: 1). I use the variable “Int” to indicate the intensity of the conflict. In the original dataset, this variable is coded 1 if there were “between 25 and 999 battle-related deaths in a given year” and 2 if there were “at least 1,000 battle-related deaths in a given year” (Themnér 2012: 9). In order to avoid using missing values for the countries that had no instance of armed conflict at all, meaning less than 25 battle-related deaths in a year, I code these as 0. It appears as if there are now a larger amount of asylum seekers from states in such armed conflicts than there

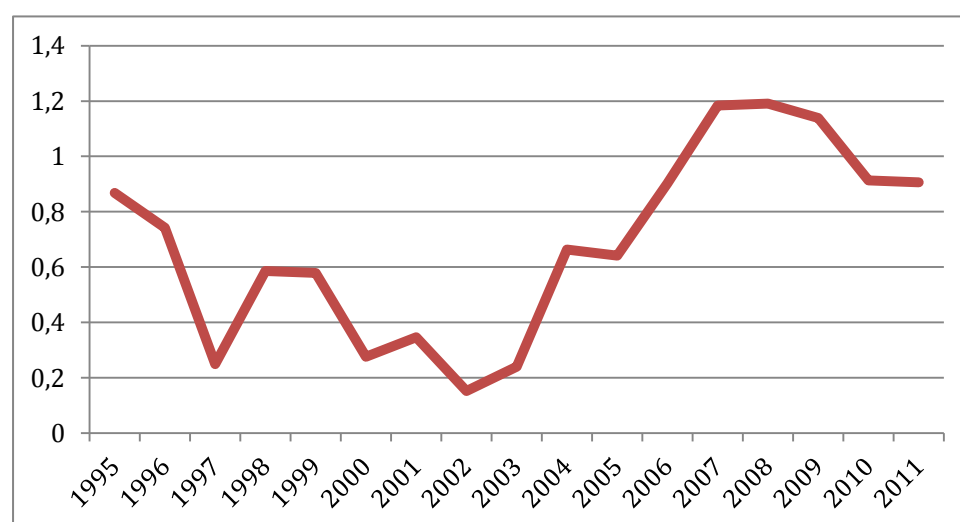
²⁸ These broad categories are identical (except one), but the measures and definitions are not.

were in the last few years of the 1990's and the early 2000's. Figure 4.4 shows this development, which signals a larger portion of asylum seekers from war-torn areas over the time period of this study.

The Refugee Convention emphasises the need for a person to be persecuted due to certain characteristics with their person in order to fulfil its criteria. A general war may not be enough, and persons who come from civil war torn countries may be granted refuge under the supplementary status instead. However, I include a variable to tap into large-scale conflicts because these often correlate with general persecution. For instance, the frequent use of rape during war may cause many women to fall under the Refugee Convention as they are persecuted for their “membership in a particular social group”.

As mentioned in the definition of the dataset, at least one of the parties of the conflict has to be the state in order to be included in the variable (Themnér 2012: 1). An asylum seeker from a troubled part of a country may be asked to return and reside in another part of his or her country in an instance where two non-state actors are fighting. In states with a strong capacity, the state will often be able to protect its citizens and control the conflict. Again, I hope to include this aspect in a variable measuring state failure, elaborated on below. Still, it is likely that there will be an increased chance of gaining asylum if there is a serious conflict in the country, regardless of whether or not the state is part of the conflict.

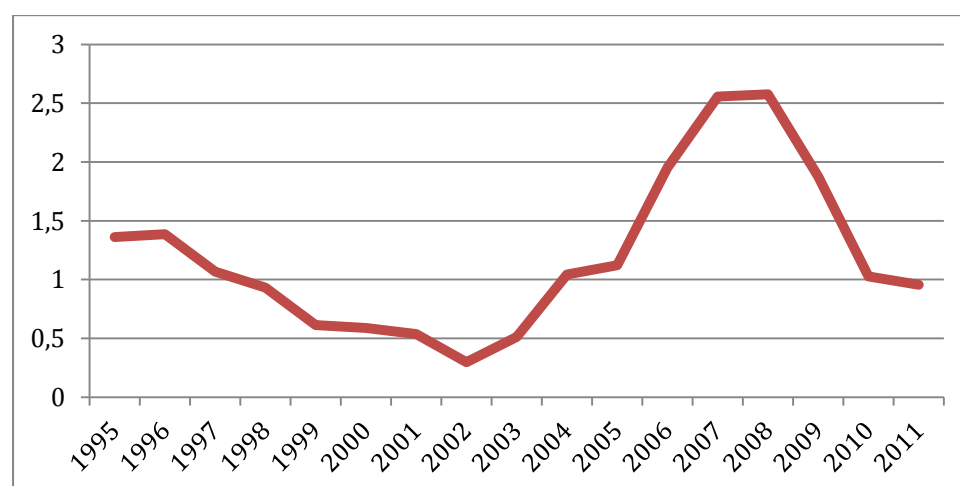
Figure 4.4. The weighted average intensity of war for countries of origin in the dataset, 1995-2011. Scale from 0-2.



Source: Gleditsch et al (2002).

Second, I use the State Failure Problem Set (SFPS) of Marshall, Gurr and Harff to account for instances where the war is a result of ethnic clashes over government access. This is important due to the Refugee Conventions' references to persecution due to a person's membership in a social group, religion or race. In the dataset, ethnic war is defined as "episodes of violent conflict between governments and national, ethnic, religious, or other communal minorities (ethnic challengers) in which the challengers seek major changes in their status" (Gurr et al. 2012: 6). There is a high threshold for a conflict to be included as an ethnic war in this measure.²⁹ While an overall measure of ethnic conflict without such high thresholds would have been preferable, the measure is still likely to account for much of the variation stemming from persecution and danger due to a person's characteristics, as mentioned above, in particular because the deaths may result from a broad range of categories.

Figure 4.5. The weighted average degree of ethnic war for countries of origin in the dataset, 1995-2011.



Source: Gurr et al (2011).

Interestingly, Figure 4.5 shows that the portion of asylum seekers from countries with a presence of ethnic war, have increased at roughly the same time as that of the general war measure explained above. This indicates that the two measures may measure many of the same conflicts, though it is also clear that this variable has much fewer changes in score, a

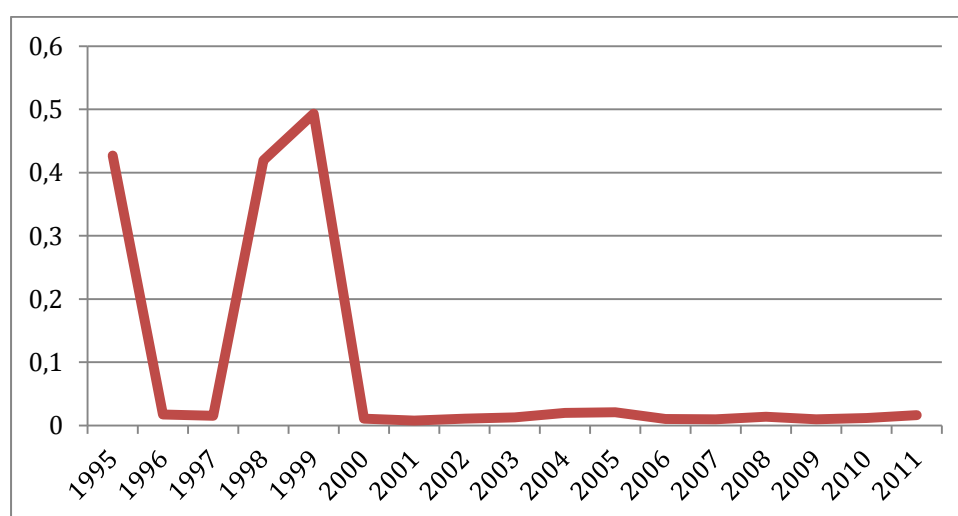
²⁹ An ethnic war is only coded as such in the dataset if each party manages to mobilize at least 1000 people for their cause, the conflict-related death toll exceeds 1000 over the course of the conflict, and there is at least one year where there were at least 1000 direct conflict-related deaths. Importantly, these deaths may result from "armed conflict, terrorism, rioting, or government repression" (Gurr et al. 2012: 6).

signal that there are fewer cases of ethnic war. The similar development over time of these two variables should not pose a problem, as they are included in an index.

In the origin dataset, the variable is coded from 0 to 4, where 0 accounted for those countries that had between 0 and 100 deaths related to ethnic fighting in a year. However, as above, in order to avoid missing values for those countries where there was no instance of ethnic war at all, I add a value of one to the variable. Hence, the variable is coded from 0 to 5. Whenever there were two such conflicts reported in a given year, I took the average of the two scores. There were seven instances of this.

Third, I use the SFPS to measure the magnitude of instances of genocide and politicide, by the scaled annual deaths resulting from such events. Genocide and politicide is defined as involving “the promotion, execution, and/or implied consent of sustained policies by governing elites or their agents – or in the case of civil war, either of the contending authorities – that result in the deaths of a substantial portion of a communal group or politicized non-communal group” (Gurr et al. 2012: 14). This variable is also included in order to secure a measure of those who risk persecution due to their race, religion or membership of a targeted social group. However, there are almost no large instances of this measure, apart from two dramatic surges in the 1990’s (see Figure 4.6). It is likely that this stems from the large number of asylum seekers from the Balkan wars. Similar to the variable above, I added a value of one to the 0-5 scale in order to include instances where there were no genocides or politicides.

Figure 4.6. Weighted average degree of genocide/politicide for countries of origin in the dataset, 1995-2011.

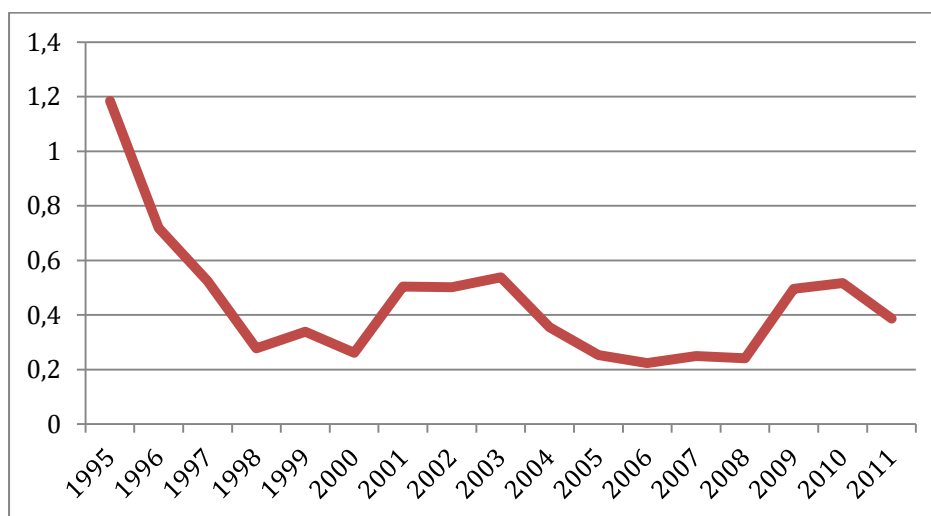


Source: Gurr et al (2011)

State failure

As mentioned earlier, one of the most important indicators of whether or not an asylum seeker will be granted refugee status is the response of his or her government if there is an insurgency, a conflict or clashes between different ethnic groups. In countries where the government is able to effectively protect internal refugees, the asylum seeker may be asked to reside another part of his or her country. For instance, it has been a common practice for Norway to ask some asylum seekers who are Afghani men older than 18 to return and reside in Kabul, where the situation is considered to be much safer than in the rest of the country (Ministry of Justice 2010). The degree to which a state may provide protection to its citizens is of outmost importance to an acceptance or rejection of a claim to refugee status. This relates closely to the concept of state failure, which in the SFPS dataset is defined as “situations in which the institutions of the central state are so weakened that they can no longer maintain authority or political order in significant parts of the country” (Gurr et al. 2012: 12). As examples, failure of security forces, anarchic conditions where warlords, militias or regional/local authorities attempt to take control over government and shut-downs of government services, are mentioned. I include the extent of state failure in my index by a variable from the SFPS dataset, coded on a scale from 1-4. I give the value 0 to all countries where there has been no regime change or state failure. As shown in Figure 4.7, the portion of asylum seekers from countries with a large degree of state failure has decreased over time.

Figure 4.7. The weighted average level of state failure for countries of origin, 1995-2011. Scale 0-4.



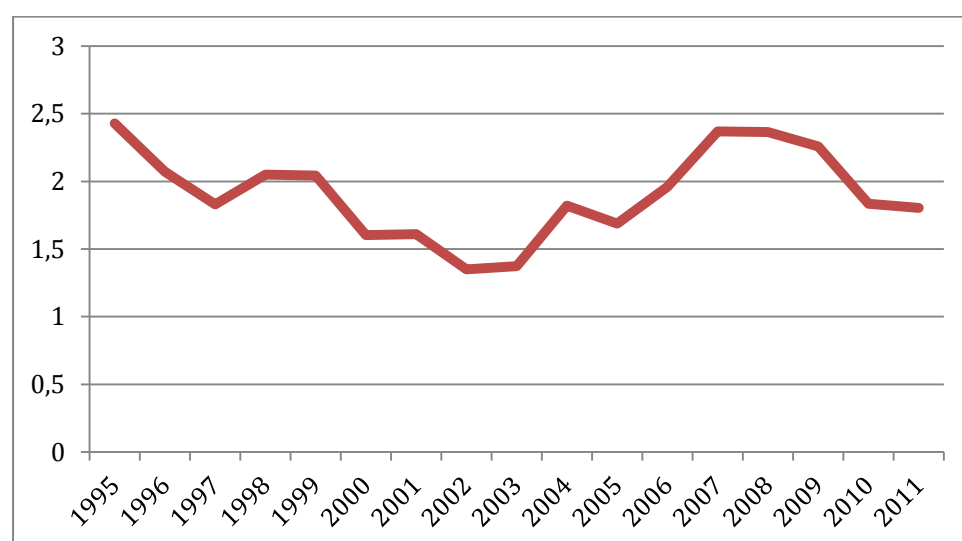
Source: Gurr et al (2011).

4.6.3 The persecution/conflict index

I combine the variables concerning conditions in an asylum seekers' home country into an index. In so doing, I create a combined measure of circumstances in the home country that may render an asylum seeker in a position where she or he fulfils the criteria in the Refugee Convention. The variables in the index all relate to instances where a country's citizens may be persecuted or victims of a conflict. As shown in the discussion above, both persecution and the presence or threat of violence is essential to refugee recognition. My index serves as a measure of the extent to which such conditions in the country of origin determine the outcome of an asylum seeker's application.

The index ranges from 0 to 6. I computed the index by dividing each variable by the maximum value the variable can take. Thus, all variables range from 0 to 1 and are equally weighted, which implies that all factors are equally important. This also entails that no one variable can increase the value of the index drastically. There are no very large increases or decreases in the persecution/conflict index and it appears to instead have a few persistent swings (see Figure 4.8). Asylum seekers appear to have arrived from particularly troubled countries in the mid 1990's, which is then followed by a mostly steady decrease until 2004, when conditions worsened. In recent years, there appears to have been a decrease in the severity of conditions in the countries of origin.

Figure 4.8. Weighted average value on the persecution/conflict index for countries included in the dataset. Scale from 0-6.



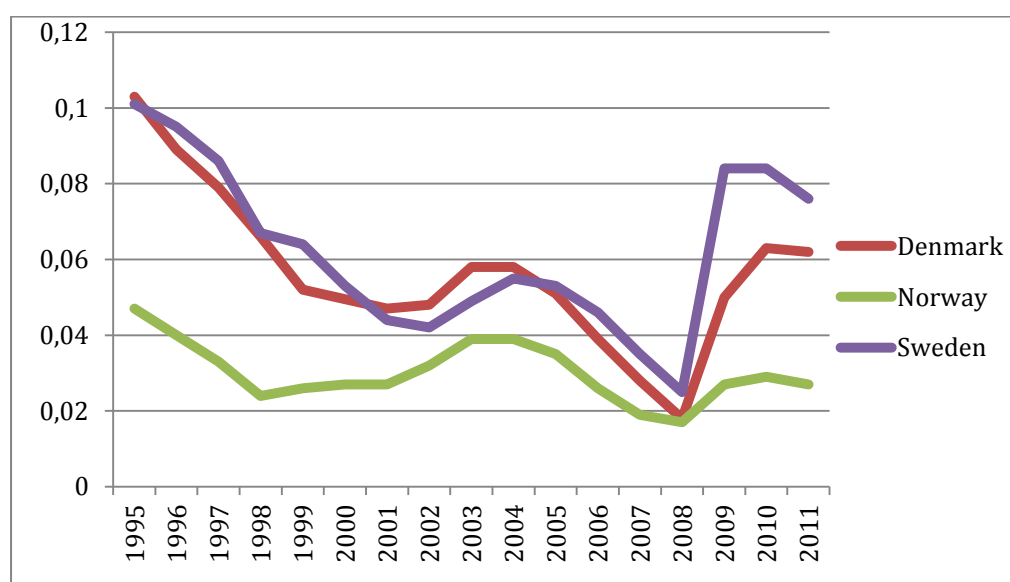
Sources: Gurr et al (2011), Cornett et al (2011) and Gleditsch et al (2002).

4.6.4 Control variables

Unemployment

I include the unemployment rate of the destination country, found to have a negative effect on recognition rates by Neumayer (2005a) and on the recognition rate and the supplementary status combined by Gudbrandsen (2010). An inclusion of the economic conditions³⁰ of the destination country is also justified by partisan theory, as economic conditions are thought to affect the ability of government to see through their preferred policies. The unemployment rate is defined as the number of registered unemployed divided by the number of persons in the labour force, gathered by each country's employment office.

Figure 4.9. Unemployment rate for Denmark, Norway and Sweden, 1995-2011.



Source: International Labour Organization (2008), Statistics Denmark (2012a), Statistics Norway (2012b), Statistics Sweden (2012).

Figure 4.9 shows that the three countries have a very similar development of their unemployment rates in the time period covered. There was a decrease in the unemployment rate of all three countries between 1995 and 2001, before they then increased for a few years, until the financial crisis of 2008. Since then, unemployment rates have mostly risen, though the last year of the analysis shows signs of a levelling. The data is taken from the

³⁰ I do not include GDP per capita, as Neumayer (2005a), for instance, has done. I exclude this because it would explain the same thing as unemployment rate, namely the effect of economic conditions. I use unemployment rate because it measures more directly the economic situation for the population.

International Labour Organization (ILO) (International Labour Organization 2008)³¹. For years where ILO data are missing, mostly the past few years, I draw from the statistics bureaus of each Scandinavian country (Statistics Denmark 2012a; Statistics Norway 2012b; Statistics Sweden 2012).

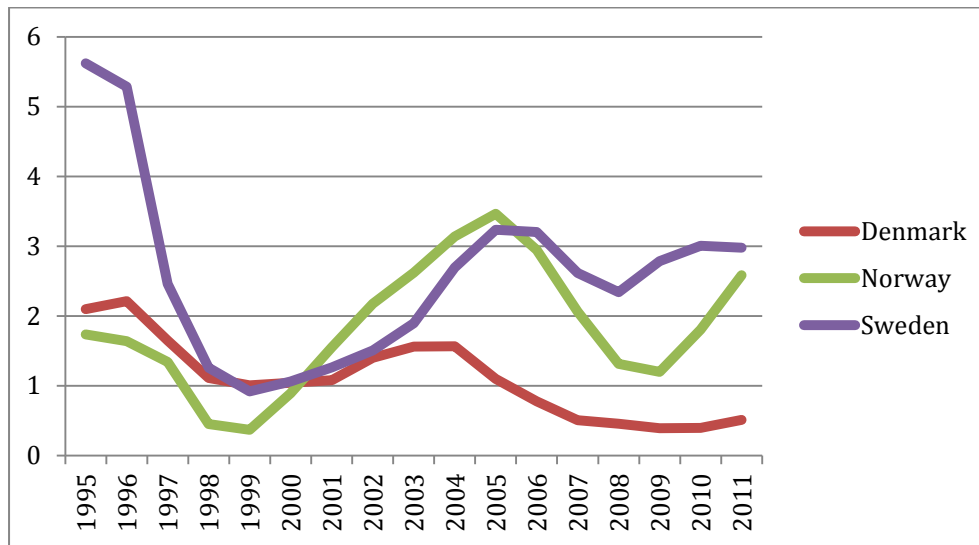
Previous asylum seekers

In order to control for the possibility that higher number of asylum seekers cause countries to resort to lower recognition rates, I include a variable for the number of asylum seekers. Such an effect was found by Neumayer (2005a). In addition, as previously argued, the number of asylum seekers is thought to be endogenous to recognition rates. Recognition rates may also affect the number of asylum seekers and not just the other way around. I therefore use past numbers of asylum seekers. I follow Neumayer (2005a) in taking the total number of asylum seekers per thousand inhabitants of the destination country, averaged over the past two to five years. There is a marked difference between the three countries in this measure (see Figure 4.10). Denmark has clearly seen the lowest amount of asylum seekers relative to its population size, whilst Sweden has seen the largest. This is true for most of the time period covered.

Data for the past number of asylum seekers stems from the immigration authorities of Norway (Norwegian Directorate of Immigration 2009), Sweden (Swedish Migration Board 2011) and Denmark (The Danish Immigration Service 2011), supplemented by UNHCR statistical overviews for the years 1996 to 1999, for Norway and Denmark (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees 1996-1999). Population data are from Statistics Norway (2012a), Statistics Sweden (2011) and Statistics Denmark (2012b).

³¹ I am unable to provide an exact source to these statistics as the tables must be calculated and the web address is not distinct.

Figure 4.10 Previous asylum seekers, average in the past two to five years by per thousand inhabitants in destination country, 1995-2011.



Source: Norwegian Directorate of Immigration (2009), Swedish Migration Board (2011), the Danish Immigration Service (2010), UNHCR (1996-1999), Statistics Norway (2012a), Statistics Sweden (2011) and Statistics Denmark (2012b).

4.7 Missing data

I will briefly address some of the issues in this dataset with regards to missing data.

As mentioned in Section 4.4, recognition rates for the year 2000 for Denmark are not available. This is a problem if the missing data have characteristics that would alter the conclusions drawn in the study. Although it cannot be ruled out that the missing data would alter my estimations significantly, it is unlikely seeing as it is only one year in the middle of the time period studied.

I also encounter a problem with missing values for some of the variables for the countries of origin. I replace the missing value for a small number of countries if two criteria are satisfied. First, the country must have a value in the dataset within plus or minus four years. One of these values is then used for the missing one. I prioritize past values in cases of conflict, in order to prevent endogeneity bias. Second, values on the variable must be known to not change dramatically (Wig 2011: 78). This is satisfied for most of the variables chosen in this analysis. A country may shift one point up or down on the polity scale, for instance, but there are few dramatic changes. I replace values for a total of eight countries. A complete list can be found in the appendix.

I choose this solution because many of the countries that have missing values are also the origin countries of a large number of asylum seekers in Scandinavia, for instance, Afghanistan and Bosnia-Herzegovina. The main reason for missing values is that the polity scale treats countries where there is a foreign intervention or a current transition as system missing (T. Gurr et al. 2011: 17), and such situations often involve increasing numbers of asylum seekers. It would be a great loss for the analysis to not include many observations for these countries. My solution still leaves some missing values, mainly from Afghanistan, Bosnia-Herzegovina and Lebanon.

4.8 Statistical model

I estimate the following regression model³²:

$$y_{ijt} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 x_{ijt} + \varepsilon_{ijt}$$

where y is the recognition rate, the subscript i represents each destination country and the subscript j represents each origin country in year t . β_0 is regression's constant. β_1 is a vector of regression coefficients on the variables in x . The vector x includes all the independent variables, including dummy variables. The ε_{ijt} is a stochastic error term.

I estimate this model with ordinary least squares regression (OLS) with fixed effects for both time and country of origin³³, constructed as dummy variables. This is similar to estimating a fixed effects model for panel data, except that I am able to include weights³⁴ and control for developments over time. In fixed effects models, factors that do not vary between country of origin (in this case) and time are kept constant. In contrast, the use of OLS with fixed effects essentially creates three levels of analysis (time, origin country, destination country).

I include dummy variables for each of the three levels in order to reduce the risk of omitted variable bias. First, using time fixed effects allows me to control for any general variation over time that is not due to the other variables included in the model. This is essential in my analysis, as it is likely that there has been a change in the general level of

³² This model is similar to that of Neumayer (2005a), except that the fixed effects used in my analysis changes the definition of the error term.

³³ Two dummy variables for two of the three destination countries are also included.

³⁴ I explain this choice in the Section below, Section 4.8.1.

recognition rates over time that is not caused by the other variables included in the model. For instance, recognition rates may also be influenced by the development in the European Union, as has been suggested by some (see e.g. Toshkov and de Haan 2013). Second, by controlling for the country of origin I make sure that no factors specific to that country that are not picked up by the persecution/conflict index may bias the estimates. For instance, some countries may have high recognition rates in one or more of the Scandinavian countries due to historical ties to that country. The country of origin fixed effects will pick up this effect. This is important, because if the effect of the historical ties included in the error term correlate with the persecution/conflict index, this can create endogeneity bias. Third, dummy variables for destination country ensures that general differences in recognition rates between the Scandinavian countries that are not caused by political or economic factors are controlled for.

Like all other models, the model chosen here has its limitations. In particular, I lose information by including many controls. As the number of observations is large (3585), the inclusion of dummy variables should be possible, but they will make it more difficult to obtain significant results because there is less variation in the data to be accounted for by the independent variables. However, a misspecified model must be considered worse, as results obtained from such a model will per definition be wrong.

4.8.1 Model specifications

For the OLS assumptions to be satisfied, the error terms must all have the same variance and be uncorrelated with one another (Kennedy 2008: 41). The OLS estimates of the coefficients will still be unbiased, but the estimates of the standard errors are not, and hence inference will be invalid. The Breusch-Pagan test tests for the nullhypothesis of constant variance of the residuals (Wooldridge 2009: 271-274). The result of the test for my model as outlined above, was a rejection of this nullhypothesis. There are several reasons why this assumption may be violated in my model, and I correct for these problems in two ways.

First, observations for the same origin country might not be independent, both across destination country and over time. If a specific and unusual event in one origin country in a given year makes it more likely for a person from that country to be granted refugee status in Norway, it will also be more likely for him to be recognised in Denmark and Sweden in the same year, and probably also the following year. Thus the error terms will be correlated. I control for this possibility by estimating robust standard errors clustered by

country of origin³⁵, which are used to secure valid standard errors in the face of correlated errors and heteroskedasticity, in particular.

Second, as the dependent variable is defined as the number of asylum seekers granted asylum in any one year relative to the number of asylum claims decided upon for applicants from the same country, it is highly sensitive to the number of persons whose case was decided upon from each country. This may introduce heteroskedasticity, as the variance of the error term is not constant over time. The variance of the error term will be higher for observations based on few asylum seekers, compared to observations based on many since in the former case, a single applicant can change the value of the dependent variable dramatically. For example, there are some countries, such as Zimbabwe, that are only represented by a small number of asylum seekers who only sporadically apply for asylum in Norway. If only two citizens from Zimbabwe apply for asylum in a given year and one of them is granted refugee status, then the recognition rate will be 0.50, which is a very high number. In contrast, all three Scandinavian countries assess hundreds of applications from Iraqis each year, which makes the decision for one individual applicant much less important. It is thus reasonable to assume that the variance of the error term is proportional to the number of asylum seekers that a given observation is based on.

To correct for this form of heteroskedasticity, I employ the analytical weights function in Stata, to weigh the observations by the square root of the number of asylum applications the recognition rate is based on. Stata then produces weights that are inversely proportional to the variance of the recognition rate. This gives observations from countries with a large number of applicants more weight than those from which there are few applicants.

The data on the number of asylum seekers from each country are gathered from the same sources as I used to compute recognition rates. For the years 1995-1999, for which I use Neumayer's dataset for the dependent variable, I have gathered data from Statistics Denmark, the Norwegian Directorate of Immigration and from the Swedish Migration Board. In the case of Norway and Sweden, neither agencies provide a comprehensive list of which countries asylum seekers arrive from. I therefore supplement the data from the national authorities with yearly reports from UNHCR. Still, this leaves a number of missing values,

³⁵ The alternative would be to cluster by the countries of destination, in this case Norway, Sweden and Denmark. However, such a small number of clusters would bias the standard-errors downward (Cameron et al. 2008: 414). I therefore opt for clustering within country of origin as this provides a more conservative estimate as well as for the reasons mentioned above.

12% of the total number of observations. I have chosen to replace the missing values with those of the next available year. In cases where there is a missing value between two years that do have a value, I use the average of those two values. This is likely to be a good approximation for two reasons. First, the number of asylum seekers rarely increases or decreases rapidly. The figures are largely stable at the country level. Second, as most of the data are gathered from the national authorities, it is likely that if there were a large increase or decrease, this would be reported, as it would show a trend in who seeks asylum. For instance, the flow of asylum seekers from Bosnia-Herzegovina varied greatly in the years between 1995 and 1999. In Sweden, 1059 asylum seekers arrived in 1995, and only 262 in 1996. This figure is reported for exactly this reason. Hence, while this certainly is a problem and I urge the reader to keep this in mind; In my opinion, the benefit of including weights compensate for the drawbacks stemming from the lack of data.

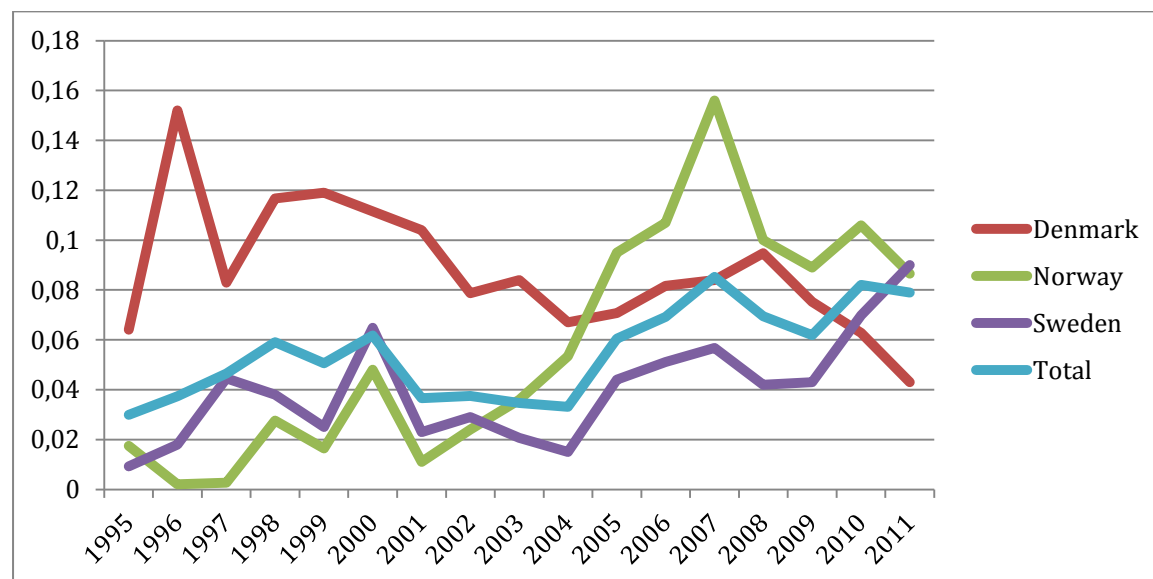
5 Results

5.1 The initial question

The initial motivation for this thesis was the difference in recognition rates for refugees between the Scandinavian countries. Below I take a closer look at these discrepancies, before moving on to the results

Figure 5.1 shows the average origin-specific recognition rate per year for Norway, Sweden and Denmark. The graph illustrates a clear pattern in that recognition rates for the refugee status vary greatly between the Scandinavian countries on an overall level. There also appears to be no clear trend for the three countries combined; while one country may have a decreasing trend, another country may have increasing recognition rates at the same time.

Figure 5.1. Average of country-specific recognition rates per year for Norway, Sweden and Denmark, in addition to the average recognition rate across the three countries.



Source: Norwegian Directorate of Immigration, Swedish Migration Board and the Danish Immigration Service.

Denmark has the highest overall rate in the period up until 2004, when it was surpassed by Norway. Since then, Denmark has shown a negative trend and in 2011 the country had the lowest average recognition rate of the three Scandinavian countries.

Sweden appears to have had the opposite trend of Denmark, mostly increasing its recognition rate in the period. The most dramatic change and variation is for Norway, which through most of the 1990's had the lowest average recognition rate in Scandinavia. In the early

2000's, the average recognition rate increased dramatically, from 0.011 in 2001 to 0.156 in 2007. Since then, the rate has decreased somewhat. Interestingly, this period of increase in Norway corresponds to the transfer of power to the Social Democrats, first in 2000 and then again in 2005. The same pattern is true for Denmark, where it appears that most of the decrease has occurred during centre-right rule since 2001. However, the pattern for Sweden is the opposite. It appears that recognition rates have increased during the centre-right government, which assumed power in 2006.

Table 5.1 below confirms this pattern. The table reports the average recognition rates for each of the three Scandinavian countries during left-leaning and centre-right governments. For both Norway and Denmark, the average recognition rates have been higher during left-leaning governments. This is in accordance with hypothesis one. However, Sweden has had higher average recognition rates during centre-right rule, which is in conflict with my hypothesis. Importantly, while these figures point toward a pattern, we cannot conclude on the connection between type of government and recognition rates, as numerous other factors are not taken into account. This illustrates the need for a more formal statistical analysis.

Table 5.1. Average origin-specific recognition rate by type of government in Scandinavia

Type of government	Denmark	Norway	Sweden
Left-leaning	0.10	0.040	0.032
Centre-right	0.07	0.029	0.061

Source: Data from Danish Immigration Service, Norwegian Directorate of Immigration and the Swedish Migration Board.

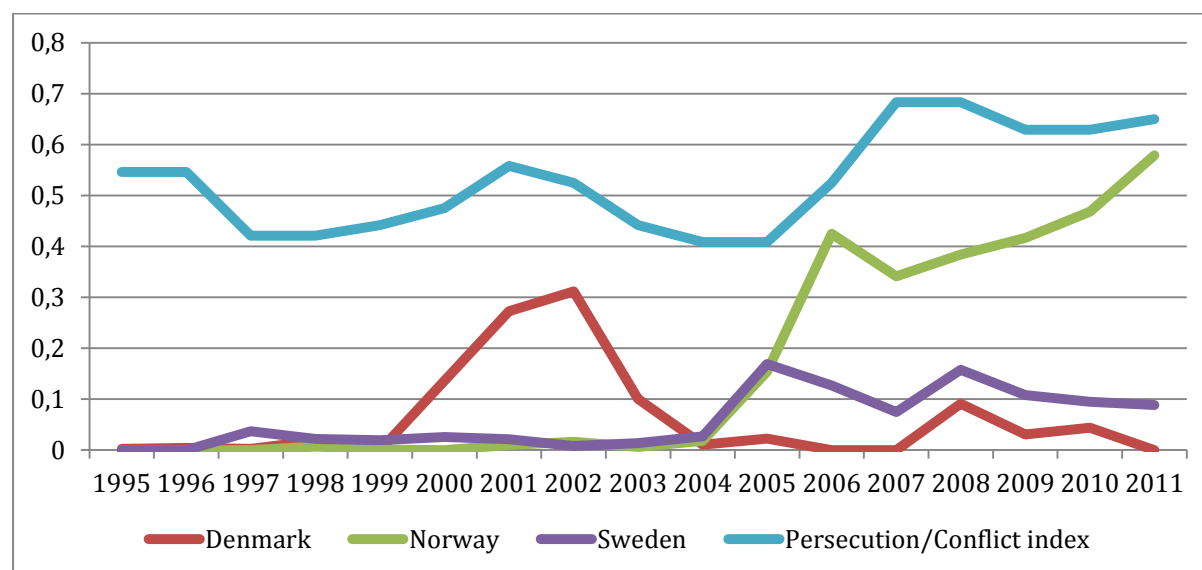
Figure 5.2 shows recognition rates for Somalia for the years 1995-2011 for each Scandinavian country³⁶. It also includes Somalia's score on the persecution/conflict index.³⁷ In contrast to the figures above, this figure allows us to see the difference in recognition rates for asylum seekers with identical conditions in their home country and whether recognition rates respond to changes in these conditions. The difference in recognition rates is obvious. While the numbers for the three countries are relatively similar between 1995 and 1999, Denmark shows a dramatic increase between 1999 and 2002. In 2002, the recognition rate is

³⁶ The figure for Denmark in 2000 is missing. The graph simply connects the rate for 1999 with that of 2001.

³⁷ I divided the index by the maximum value it takes, in order to fit it to the rest of the graph.

close to 30 percentage points higher than in Norway and Sweden. The rate then decreases in Denmark, only to see a large increase in Norway. While Denmark has hardly recognized any Somalis from 2003 until 2011, apart from in 2008, Norway's recognition rates show a mostly steady increase in the same time period, up to over 57% in 2011. Sweden's recognition rates have fallen in between that of the two other Scandinavian countries for most years.

Figure 5.2. Recognition rates for Somalia 1995-2011 and the persecution/conflict index



Source: Danish Immigration Service, Norwegian Directorate of Immigration and the Swedish Migration Board. Persecution/Conflict comprised of data from Cornett et al (2011), Gurr et al (2011) and Gleditsch et al (2002).

What is also illustrating is that while the recognition rates appear to vary somewhat in accordance with the index of conditions in Somalia, the Scandinavian countries appear to respond differently to an increase or decrease in the index. At the onset, the decrease in Somalia's score index in 1997 is difficult to respond to, as the rates are already close to zero. Only Denmark appears to respond to the increase in the severity of conditions in Somalia in the early 2000's. There is no marked increase in recognition rates in Norway and Sweden in this period. In 2006, conditions in Somalia appear to have dramatically worsened. This increase is responded to by all three countries, but most markedly by Norway. However, it appears this increase in the rate in Norway begins prior to the increase in Somalia's score on the persecution/conflict index. This is also the case for Sweden. Moreover, Norway and Sweden decrease their recognition rates at the point where Somalia experienced the very worst conditions, in 2007 and 2008. They increase their recognition rates the following year,

along with Denmark. In the last few years, Norway has increased its recognition rate for Somali refugees every year, whilst Denmark and Sweden have decreased theirs.

These illustrations show that recognition rates do vary to a large extent between destination countries over time, both when considering the average origin-specific rates and when looking at rates for a particular origin country. This points to the possibility that conditions in an asylum seeker's country of origin are treated differently in each Scandinavian country, and that these differences are guided by political considerations.

5.2 Analysis

Table 5.2 shows the results of three regressions. The dependent variable for all three models is the recognition rate, as defined under Section 4.5. The reference category for the destination country dummies and the persecution/conflict index is Denmark³⁸. I will first briefly explain each of the three models, before moving on to interpreting the results.

5.2.1 The models

The three models are distinguished by which variables are included in each of them. In model I origin country fixed effects are excluded. In model II these are included, whilst time fixed effects are excluded. In model III, all these controls are included. As models I and II are different in two ways, they cannot be directly compared. It is hard to know whether the reason for a difference between them is due to the inclusion of a new variable or the exclusion of another. Instead, comparisons should be made between either of these and model III.

The reason for including model I, where origin country fixed effects are excluded, is because the inclusion of dummy variables for each sending country will necessarily alter the model a great deal. It dramatically increases the number of variables in the regression, which causes me to lose information. This will make it more difficult to achieve significant results. It is therefore interesting to see if there is a large change in the estimation results when these dummy variables are included in model III. Origin country fixed effects account for variation across origin countries that are not picked up by the persecution/conflict index. Hence, if there is difference between countries of origin that is not accounted for by the

³⁸ The choice of Denmark as a reference category is natural, as the country is mentioned specifically in hypothesis three, making it particularly important to estimate the country's difference in estimates on the persecution/conflict in comparison to the other two countries. However, the choice of reference category has no bearing on the estimation results.

persecution/conflict index, such as the distribution of women and men from each country³⁹, the fixed effects account for this and secure that no other variables pick up the same variation.

The results reported in Table 5.2 show that there is little difference in the size of the estimates of models I and III. A notable exception is that support for anti-immigration is significant in model I and not in model III. I discuss this at length below. However, in general the inclusion of origin country fixed effects appears to have little bearing on the results.

I estimate a version of the model without time fixed effects because time controls have rarely been used in previous studies. Neither Neumayer (2005a) nor Gudbrandsen (2010) provide such controls. The effect this inclusion will have has therefore not been adequately studied. By also estimating a model (model II) without the time fixed effects, I am able to compare the result and the effect of including such controls. At the same time, including time fixed effects potentially reduces omitted variable bias and allows me to estimate the effects for variables that vary over time – left-wing government, anti-immigration parties and the persecution/conflict-index – more securely in model III.

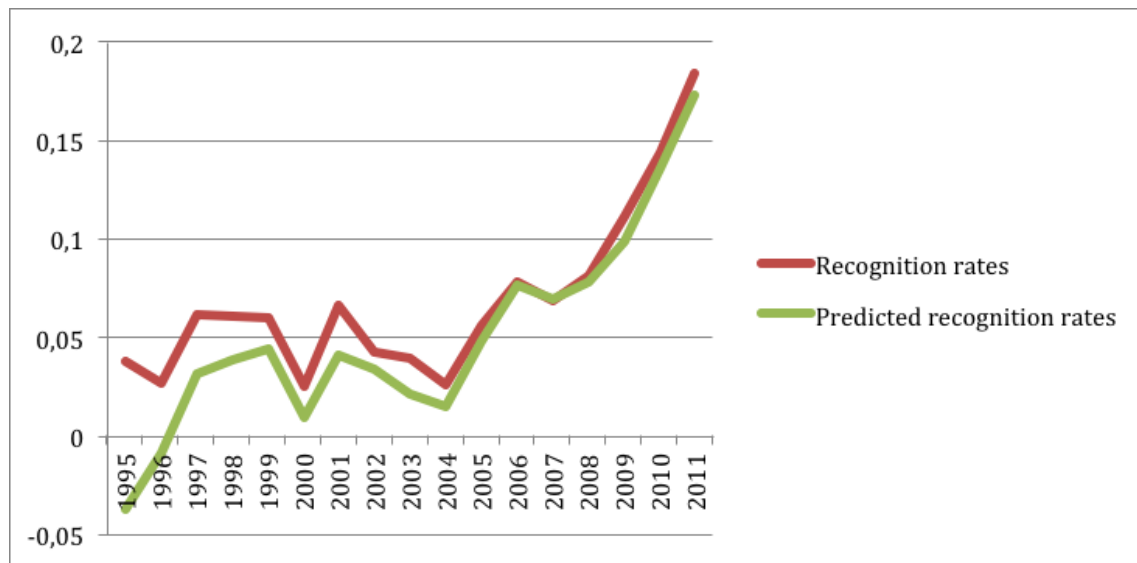
There are large differences in the estimation results from model II and model III, both when it comes to which variables are significant and when it comes to the size of the estimates. Given the strong arguments for including time fixed effects, this implies that it is most important to account for variation over time. As models I and III are much more similar, I believe their estimates to be more reliable than those of model II. For these reasons I focus mainly on model III in the following discussion.

Model III appears to predict much of the variation on the dependent variable. This is indicated by Figure 5.3 below, which shows the average recognition rates for the three countries as well as the predicted recognition rates from model III. The two variables follow each other closely, apart from a gap early on in the time period, where the predicted recognition rates are negative. This is non-sensical, since recognition rates cannot be negative in practice. However, this will happen in a linear model if the independent variables point in a negative direction.⁴⁰ Apart from this anomaly, the predicted recognition rates appear to fit well with the actual recognition rates, and so I deem model III to be a well-fitted model. This is also clear from the model's comparatively high R^2 of 0.54.

³⁹ Women generally have higher recognition rates than men, as they are considered "members of a particular social group" in the Refugee Convention and in many countries are at a greater risk of abuse than men.

⁴⁰ This is in contrast to logit models, which I run in the robustness analysis. In these models, negative predictions are not possible.

Figure 5.3. Average combined recognition rate for the Scandinavian countries and average predicted recognition rate from model III.



Sources: Recognition rates are reported by the Danish Immigration Service, the Swedish Migration Board and the Norwegian Directorate of Immigration.

5.2.1 Left-wing governments

By way of partisan theory, I hypothesised party politics to have an effect on recognition rates and expected it to take the form of a positive influence of left-leaning governments on recognition rates.

I find support for this hypothesis (H1) in models I and III, where left-wing parties have a significant and positive effect on recognition rates. When moving from a centre-right to a left-leaning government, recognition rates increase by 4.38 percentage points in model III. In other words, the pattern for Denmark and Norway shown in Table 5.1, namely that recognition rates are higher under left-leaning than centre-right governments, is present for all three countries combined when controlling for other factors.⁴¹ In model II, the estimate also has a positive sign, but it is smaller and not significant. An effect of employing time fixed effects in models I and III is that it removes confounding factors in the variation over time, making it easier to attribute a change in recognition rates to other factors. When time fixed effects are not included, the trend over time will be a part of the variation attempted

⁴¹ The average recognition rates shown in Table 5.1 displayed higher values for centre-right governments in Sweden. I do not run a separate regression on Sweden, as the low number of observations and the fact that there is only one government shift to speak of, makes it unlikely that my model will give reliable and comparable results.

Table 5.2. Results of OLS regression on recognition rates

	Model I	Model II	Model III
Left-wing governments	0.0510** (2.04)	0.00173 (0.14)	0.0438** (2.03)
Anti-immigration parties	0.746** (2.05)	1.255**** (3.52)	0.504 (1.58)
Persecution/Conflict Index	0.113*** (3.18)	0.104*** (2.64)	0.1000*** (2.71)
Persecution/Conflict Index*Norway	-0.0930** (-2.38)	-0.0722 (-1.64)	-0.0773** (-2.03)
Persecution/Conflict Index*Sweden	-0.100** (-2.99)	-0.0879** (-2.45)	-0.0880**** (-2.82)
Norway	-0.00725 (-0.10)	0.000423 (0.01)	-0.0154 (-0.24)
Sweden	0.113* (1.88)	0.183**** (3.37)	0.0830 (1.47)
Previous asylum seekers	0.0341 (1.62)	-0.0000835 (-0.01)	0.0338 (1.66)
Unemployment rate	-2.811* (-2.02)	-0.722 (-1.11)	-2.485* (-1.93)
Origin country fixed effects	No	Yes	Yes
Time fixed effects	Yes	No	Yes
Asylum seekers weights	Yes	Yes	Yes
Constant	-0.0924 (-1.07)	-0.0786 (-0.90)	0.00123 (0.02)
N	3585	3585	3585
R-squared	0.3659	0.4651	0.5468

t statistics in parentheses.

Estimated with robust standard errors, clustered by country of origin.

* p<0.01, ** p<0.05, *** p<0.01, **** p<0.001

explained by the variable measuring the governing parties, among others. Hence, we should not trust the results of model II as much as those from model III.

The finding from models I and III show that while recognition rates are supposed to be guided only by the Refugee Convention and human rights concerns, in reality they also vary according to who is in government. When a centre-right government is in control, recognition rates will be lower than they would have been under a left-leaning government. This finding is in clear support of partisan theory. Not only do governments in Scandinavia have the ability to control recognition rates, they do so in accordance with the predictions of this theory. Left-wing parties were hypothesised to have a positive impact on recognition rates, as their constituencies have a much more favourable view of immigration than their centre-right counterparties. In addition, the left's ideology also supports such an effect, as it has traditionally supported minorities and underprivileged groups. My finding is also in support of the conclusions of Gudbrandsen (2010), who analyses the effect of government on recognition rates for both the Refugee convention and the supplementary status in Norway. She finds that conservative governments have granted fewer asylum seekers a residence permit than Labour governments have. This effect of partisanship is in other words not limited to the combined status or to the supplementary status which the states can largely determine themselves. My findings show that this effect is also present for those granted refuge under international law through the Refugee Convention.

Based on partisan theory, the causality should go from voter preference and ideology via government offices to recognition rates. Although it is hard to conclude from the present quantitative analysis that this is the correct causal chain, the explanation derived from partisan theory fits my results well. In any case, it is clear that left-leaning governments do have higher recognition rates than centre-right governments, which points to a clear effect of government in an area supposedly determined by considerations of human rights. More research on which considerations steer refugee recognition should be able to point to *how* politics matters in this specific case. For now, I'll conclude that the evidence points in clear favour of partisan theory.

5.2.2 Anti-immigration parties

The second hypothesis (H2) I aimed to test was whether anti-immigration parties influence recognition rates. Specifically, I expected that increasing support for such parties result in a decrease in recognition rates. This hypothesis was derived from partisan theory by way of the

considerations the parties make when trying to satisfy their electorate. If they lose voters to the anti-immigration parties, they may seek to draw these voters back by changing their immigration policy towards a more restrictive approach, while still maintaining their ideological foundations.

None of the models support this hypothesis. The estimate of model III is positive, which is in the opposite direction of that hypothesised and it is not significant. Based on this, I cannot reject the null hypothesis of no effect of this variable. It appears that the changes in parties' immigration policy caused by the anti-immigration parties have not reached recognition rates for refugees. The parties appear to keep refugee recognition out of the consideration for how to prevent voter flight to anti-immigration parties.

Estimates of the same coefficient in Models I and II are both positive and significant. In these models, a one percentage point increase in support for anti-immigration parties results in a 0.74 and 1.25 percentage point increase in recognition rates, respectively. There is no clear reason for the surprising and counter-intuitive finding of a positive effect of anti-immigration parties in models I and II. Both empirical and methodological issues can be behind it. I propose two possible reasons for this finding.

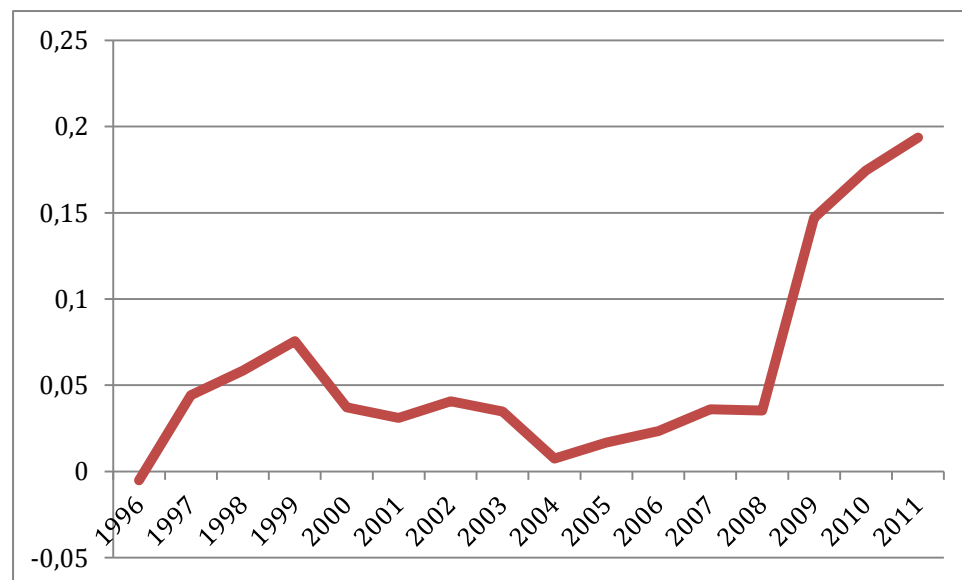
First, increasing support for anti-immigration parties might lead to a tightening of the number of people granted the supplementary status, which in turn lead the immigration authorities to grant more people refugee status under the Refugee Convention instead. As previously mentioned, it is much easier to change the number of people who are granted supplementary status protection. In this scenario, the lack of an effect of the anti-immigration parties in model III may be due to the inclusion of the origin country fixed effects, since the large number of included variables can make it harder to find significant results. However, it is beyond the scope of this thesis to investigate this possibility, as the data for the supplementary status is not readily available.

Second, if models I and II are indeed misspecified, the effects of anti-immigration parties found in these models might be spurious and the result of the exclusion of important controls. The result shown in model I may be due to the fact that support for anti-immigration parties has increased along with recognition rates for Norway and Sweden, but without any causal link between the two. Instead, if the increased popularity of the parties coincided with a change in the composition of the asylum seekers that had a positive effect on recognition rates, some of this latter effect will be picked up by the anti-immigration variable. However, this is just one possibility and it cannot be tested within my model.

Importantly, the coefficients for time fixed effects in model III are almost exclusively positive (see Figure 5.4). This shows that there is a general increase in recognition rates over time that is not captured by any of the other variables. The estimation values vary over time because they are contingent on the explanatory power of the other variables. The positive increase in the time fixed effects at the end of the time series may be due to, for instance, a decrease in the persecution/conflict index at the same time as recognition rates increase. A situation such as this will decrease the amount of variance in recognition rates that the other independent variables explain, and increase the coefficients of the time dummies. At the same time, this pattern will not be picked up by model II.

In model III, the estimates for time fixed effects mostly increase over time. The support for anti-immigration parties show the same trend (see Figure 4.1). When the time fixed effects and the anti-immigration parties have the same development over time, it is likely that this entire effect will be attributed to anti-immigration parties in the absence of time fixed effects. In other words, in model II, the effect of the variable for anti-immigration parties may have been overestimated. When time fixed effects are included, the estimate should for these reasons be more accurate.

Figure 5.4. Estimated coefficients on time dummies in model III. The reference category is 1995.



As shown by this discussion, estimating the effect of anti-immigration parties is difficult. However, the result in model II is likely to have been caused by a general trend over time, which coincides with the increasing support for these parties. While it is possible that

there has been a positive effect of anti-immigration parties on recognition rates, I find it more likely that the effects found in the first two models are due to a lack of necessary controls in each model.

A legitimate objection to the result of the analysis is that the anti-immigration parties have received little support in Sweden in the time period studied. The results may therefore be caused by very differing effects of such parties in Sweden compared to the other two countries, though the qualitative evidence referred to in Section 3.3.2 of the theory chapter suggests that there has been some adjustments by the other political parties to accommodate the rise of such sentiments in the population, illustrated by the increased support for the Swedish Democrats. I test for the option that an influence of anti-immigration parties may therefore be found in only Denmark and Norway in the robustness analysis of the next chapter.

5.2.3 Persecution and conflict

The results also reveal a difference in the emphasis put on the general conditions in an asylum seekers' home country. The variables in question are all significant, except the interaction term between Norway and the persecution/conflict index in model II. The size of the estimate is close to identical and significant in model III, when time fixed effects are included. This points to a removal of confounding factors in model III, where the effect of this variable can be more securely estimated. I therefore conclude that the coefficients estimated in models I and III are more accurate than the corresponding ones from model II in this case.

The interaction terms between country dummy variables for Norway and Sweden, respectively, and the persecution/conflict index have negative and significant effects. There are large differences in the effect of the index on recognition rates between the three Scandinavian countries. These differences confirm hypothesis three (H3). First, there is an increased likelihood of gaining refugee status if you are from a high persecution/conflict country, no matter which country you apply in. Second, this effect is much greater for Denmark, which other researchers have previously pointed to as having a more restrictive asylum policy than Norway and Sweden.

For instance, in the late 1990's the civil war in Angola worsened as the government attempted to secure control over new areas of the country. Consequently, Angola's value on the persecution/conflict index increased by one point between the years 1997 and 1998. Such

an increase of one point on the index produces a large difference in the likelihood of gaining refugee status in the Scandinavian countries. A one-point increase will result in a 10 percentage point increase in the likelihood of being recognized as a refugee in Denmark in model III. The effect is much lower in Sweden and Norway. In Norway it is 7.73 percentage points lower, at 2.27 percentage points. In Sweden it is 8.8 percentage points lower, at 1.2 percentage points⁴². Hence, for persons coming from Angola in 1998, the difference in recognition rates between them and those whose case was decided upon in 1997, will be much greater in Denmark than in the two other countries. In other words, the importance of being from a high persecution/conflict country when hoping to be recognized as a refugee is much less in Sweden and Norway than in Denmark.

This is illustrated by great differences in the likelihood of gaining refugee status from persons from the same country in Scandinavia. Table 5.3 shows the difference in the predicted likelihood of being recognized as a refugee on the basis of model III, in the year 2006, for three countries with different values on the persecution/conflict index. In 2006, Norway and Sweden had left-leaning governments, whilst Denmark had a centre/right government. The unemployment rate is similar, at the lowest in Norway at 0.026 and the highest in Sweden at 0.046. The previous asylum variable takes on the highest value in the case of Sweden and the lowest value in Denmark. For a country with a score just shy of the mean of 1.2 on the index, in this case Azerbaijan, the predicted likelihood of gaining asylum is the highest in Norway and the lowest in Denmark. Sweden's predicted recognition rate is roughly the average of the two other scores. The pattern is the same for Cameroon, which has a somewhat higher score. The differences between the Scandinavian countries' predicted recognition rates are somewhat smaller than they are in the case of Azerbaijan. Lastly, when looking at Iraq, which has a very high score on the persecution/conflict index, Denmark has the largest predicted recognition rate. Norway's predicted recognition rate is not much smaller, whilst that of Sweden is roughly 6 percentage points lower.

This shows that the likelihood of gaining refugee status varies a great deal with both destination country and with the conditions in the home country of the asylum seeker. In order to be granted refugee status under the Refugee Convention, an asylum seeker from a country with a low level of general conflict would be advised to go to Norway in 2006. He or she would also have a fair chance in Sweden. If, on the other hand, the asylum seeker was from a country in grave conflict, the likelihood of refugee recognition is much higher in

⁴² As the size of the estimations in model I and II are not much different and follow the same pattern, I only report the figures for model III.

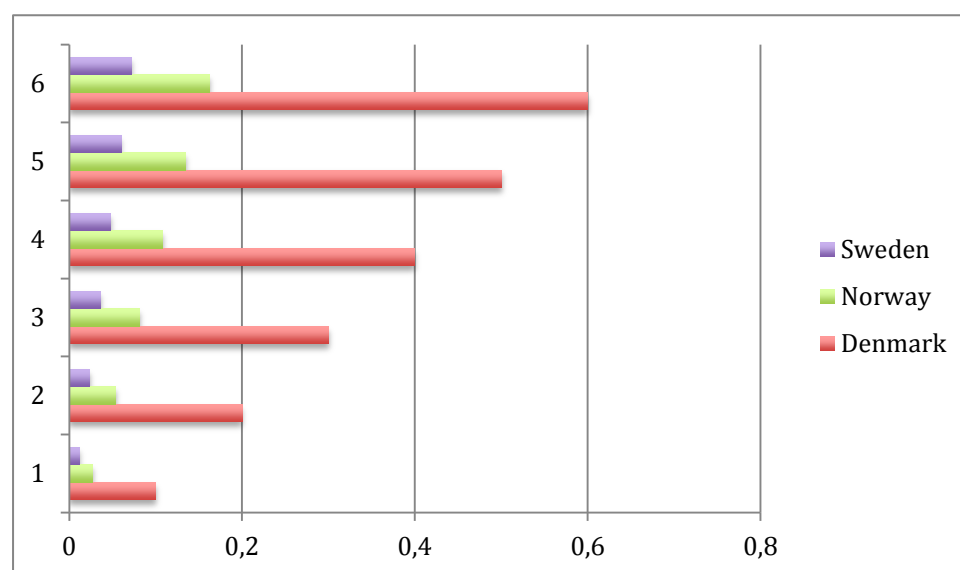
Denmark. While the overall level of conflict also matters in Sweden, it does not increase the chance of being recognized as a refugee to such a large extent as it does in Denmark.

Table 5.3. Predicted likelihood of gaining refugee status in 2006.

Country	Persecution/conflict index	Predicted recognition rates		
		Denmark	Norway	Sweden
Azerbaijan	1.1	0.012	0.088	0.05
Cameroon	1.325	0.05	0.108	0.069
Iraq	2.225	0.156	0.144	0.095

Source: Persecution/Conflict index is comprised data from Cornett et al (2011), Gleditsch et al (2002) and Gurr et al (2011).

Figure 5.5. The likelihood of refugee recognition by the persecution/conflict index, other variables kept constant.



As further illustration of this difference between the Scandinavian countries, Figure 5.5 shows the likelihood of an asylum seeker being granted asylum when other variables are kept constant, while the persecution/conflict index varies. This does not show the constant for the recognition rates and therefore not the overall recognition rate for each of the three countries. Instead, the figure merely shows the difference in the effect of the persecution/conflict index between different scores on the index. The differences are large. In Denmark, the likelihood of refugee recognition for a person from a country that has a maximum score on the persecution/conflict index is 60 percentage points higher than for one

from a country with a score of zero. The corresponding number in Norway is 14 percentage points and for Sweden it is 7 percentage points.

It is interesting in itself that these numbers vary to such a great extent. It shows that the Refugee Convention is treated in very different ways within Scandinavia. This finding is in sharp contrast to Frode Forfang's statement, presented in the very beginning of this thesis, that the Scandinavian countries do not evaluate asylum claims in a significantly different way. According to my findings, it appears that they do evaluate applications differently. Where an asylum application is lodged is therefore of great importance as the conditions that are necessary for an asylum seekers' claim to be recognized differ to such a great extent between countries, at least within Scandinavia.

The fact that the evaluation of the level of persecution and conflict are so different in each Scandinavian country provides new information into what determines the outcome of asylum applications. The basis for hypothesis three, which I find support for, was that stricter countries are likely to emphasise conditions in the country of origin more when assessing asylum applications, as it is more difficult to have a strict policy toward countries which people know are in a large-scale conflict. This appears to be true in Scandinavia. According to Gudbrandsen (2013), Hatton (2009) and Brochmann and Hagelund (2011), Denmark is the most restrictive Scandinavian country, followed by Norway. Sweden is considered the most liberal. Different asylum policies appear to manifest themselves in the weight put on conditions in the country of origin.

At the same time, it is difficult to conclude without doubt that this is the basis for the difference between the Scandinavian countries. An alternative explanation for Denmark's focus on the objective conditions in the country of origin could be that Denmark is simply better at finding those who truly need refuge, whilst the decision-making in Norway and Sweden is more arbitrary. There is no immediate explanation for why this should be the case. The countries' immigration administrations are organized in a very similar way, and there is no reason why the case handlers in Denmark should be "better" at evaluating an asylum claim than those in Sweden and Norway. However, more research on the determinants of asylum recognition in other groups of countries is the only way to securely establish whether the pattern of a general, restrictive asylum policy is reflected in the emphasis on conditions in the country of origin or whether there is something else behind this result.

5.2.4 The control variables

I will briefly address the findings for the control variables included in the regressions. While there are no hypotheses linked to these variables, they still provide clues to what affects recognition rates.

There is no effect of the variable for previous asylum seekers in any of the models. This result is contrary to that of both Neumayer (2005a), Gudbrandsen (2010) and Toshkov (2013), as they all find significant results for this variable. However, they appear to operationalize the variable differently and also find contradictory results. While Gudbrandsen finds a positive effect of the number of asylum seekers from each sending country, Neumayer and Toshkov both find a negative effect of the number of previous asylum seekers on recognition rates. In any case, their studies do not focus exclusively on the three Scandinavian countries and so their results are not directly transferrable to these countries.

I do find a negative effect of unemployment in models I and III, albeit only at a 10% significance level. Significance at this level implies that there is a 10% chance of concluding that there is an effect when there in reality is no such effect. Caution should therefore be made in concluding on the effect of this variable. The estimate in model III is quite large. If the unemployment rate increases by one percentage point, the likelihood of gaining refugee status will decrease by 2.485 percentage points. When considering the dramatic increase in the unemployment rate of Denmark and Sweden when the financial crisis hit in 2008, the effect could be substantial. For instance, Denmark saw an increase in its unemployment rate from 2% in 2008 to 5% in 2009. Without taking into consideration other effects and that the effect may be different when only considering Denmark, this would suggest a drop in recognition rates of 7.46 percentage points. As Denmark received 3855 applications for asylum in 2009, this implies that 288 asylum seekers, who would otherwise have been granted refugee status, would not receive such recognition. This finding is in accordance with previous studies, except that of Toshkov (2013), who only finds this effect when the recognition rate is not specific to origin country.

The dummy variable for Sweden is significant in models I and II. The correct interpretation is that there is a positive and systematic difference between Denmark and Sweden, which is not explained by the other variables. As this effect is not found when other controls are included in model III, the result is not conclusive.

5.3 Determinants of refugee recognition

Combined, the analysis presented here in both the general and the country-specific analysis show that the individual merit of each asylum claim is not the only factor that affects the outcome of the asylum application.

Perhaps most importantly, parties in government affect recognition rates. Left-leaning governments have a positive effect on recognition rates compared to centre-right governments. Hence, the assessment of asylum applications is not outside the realm of politics, and governments appear to steer recognition rates in a more or less restrictive direction. It appears that the policies pursued by the government affects to what extent conditions in the country of origin of the asylum seeker is important for the outcome of his or her application. In Denmark, where the governments have been more restrictive, such conditions matter more. A possible reason for this, as I suggested when developing hypothesis three, is that countries where there is a restrictive policy may set higher standards for “trusting” the asylum seekers’ claim of persecution. If the standard for “believing” the applicant is high, many of those from countries where human rights abuses and instances of war are less frequent and serious, may not be able to prove their claim. Hence, persons from countries with a higher score on the persecution/conflict index will provide a more “believable” claim for asylum.

Moreover, if there is a political aim of reducing the number of those granted asylum, it may still be difficult to use these standards on applicants from countries where there is an obvious and dire situation, such as currently in Syria. The media is often more concerned with the outcome of applications from such serious and new conflicts, more so than from countries where human rights abuses have been stable and common for a number of years, such as Morocco. This may preclude a restrictive approach to applications from citizens of countries in a well-known and serious situation in particular. Because of this, Denmark may have ended up valuing the conditions of the country of origin more than Sweden and Norway have.

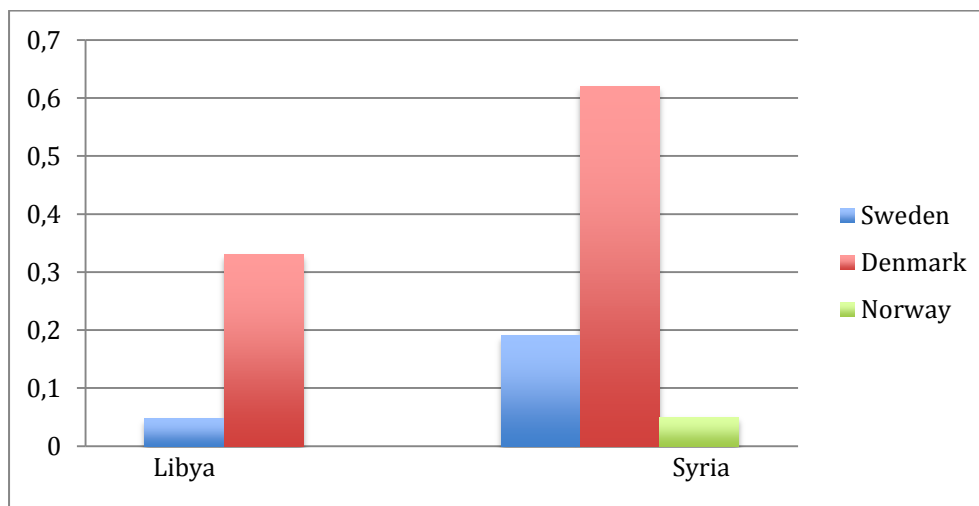
In a last illustrating figure, I show the observed recognition rates for Libya and Syria in 2011.⁴³ The so-called Arab Spring reached the two countries in 2011 and resulted in a war between government forces and demonstrators. The developments in Syria and Libya

⁴³ I ask the reader to keep in mind that these are only figures for the Convention status. The low figures for Libya in Norway does not indicate that no one from this country were allowed residence. It simply means they were not given the refugee status under the Refugee Convention.

received widespread media coverage and were among the most talked-about conflicts that year.

Figure 5.6 shows that Denmark clearly recognized many more refugees from both countries than what Norway and Sweden did. Moreover, the recognition rates for these countries for Denmark were either very close to or *higher* than those predicted by model III. In the case of Norway and Sweden, the recognition rates for Syria and Libya were all lower than those predicted. In this case, this may very well be the effect of media and public attention to an on-going conflict. While this evidence is anecdotal, it does support a hypothesis that such factors too matter more in Denmark than they do in the two other countries.

Figure 5.6. Recognition rates for Libya and Syria in each Scandinavian country in 2011.



Sources: Danish Immigration Service, Norwegian Directorate of Immigration and the Swedish Migration Board.

6 Robustness tests

In the main analysis in the previous chapter, I presented three models, estimated using OLS regression with and without country of origin fixed effects and time fixed effects. In this chapter, I go more in-depth to show that some potentially problematic aspects of the analysis are sufficiently controlled for, and that my previous results are robust. I also investigate the potential effects of outliers in the dataset.

6.1 Influence of potentially biased variables

In Section 4.4.1 and Section 4.2, I pointed to two potentially problematic aspects with two variables used in the main analysis.

First, the recognition rates reported for Sweden in the time period 2000-2007 may be biased upwards. The figure for those rejected is only based on first-instance decisions, while the figure for those who were recognized as refugees is based on both the first- and the second-instance. In order to estimate the effect of this potential bias in my analysis, I have estimated model III, but with a dummy variable for Sweden for these years (see Table A.3, model A.I, in the appendix). The results show that the dummy variable has a negative sign, the opposite of that expected, and it is clearly insignificant. Hence, the recognition rates for Sweden in this period should not be expected to have biased my results in the main analysis.

Second, in the analysis I found that for support for anti-immigration parties has an insignificant effect on recognition rates. If there is in fact no effect of these parties in Sweden, they have only had limited support thus far, my estimate for all countries combined will be lower – and even insignificantly different from zero – even if there is an effect in Denmark and Norway. As mentioned in Section 4.2, a possibility of large differences in the effect of the variables across the three countries is one of the disadvantages of an analysis of more than one country. Denmark and Norway have seen the largest support for anti-immigration parties and so there may be an effect of these parties when only using data for these two countries. I test this possibility in two different models (see model A.I and model A.II in Table A.4 in the appendix). The first model corresponds to model I in the main analysis, where origin country fixed effects are excluded. The second model corresponds to model III in the main analysis, which is the main model. The reason for excluding origin country fixed effects in one of the models is that a number of these are excluded due to multicollinearity

when attempting to run the main model.⁴⁴ This is not surprising, as the number of observations is reduced when excluding all observations for Sweden. By attempting to run the analysis with these two models, which both correspond to models in the main analysis, a conclusion for Denmark and Norway can be drawn with more confidence. The result is the same in both models: The effect of support for anti-immigration parties is still insignificant, as it was in the main analysis. Hence, I am not able to reject the null hypothesis of no effect of support for anti-immigration parties on recognition rates for only Denmark and Norway either.

6.2 Logistic regression

As my observations for the dependent variable include a large number of zero values, I also attempt to estimate the main model by splitting the dependent variable into subsets. In the first model, the dependent variable is zero whenever recognition rates are zero and one whenever they are above zero. This model is estimated by use of logistic regression (see Table A.5, model A.II, in the appendix). The second model is estimated by a ordered logit regression, where the dependent variable is zero for recognition rates that are zero, one for rates higher than zero and lower than 0.1, and two for rates above this (see Table A.5, model A.III, in the appendix).

The results show that the effect of partisan influence is robust to these changes in the model; it is significant in both models. Support for anti-immigration parties is significant in the first model, but not in the more nuanced second model. Interestingly, the variable has the hypothesized negative effect in the first model. The variables concerning conditions in the country of origin of asylum seekers are only significant in the second model. This is perhaps not as surprising when considering the effect of the grouping of the recognition rates done for these models. The variables for both support for anti-immigration parties and left-wing parties correspond to many observed values for recognition rates. In contrast, each score on the index only has one recognition rate, which is now much less nuanced than it is in the main model. This loss of information may make it harder to find a clear pattern and a significant result. Such an interpretation is supported by the fact that the variables measuring the effect of the index in each destination country is significant in model II, which has a somewhat more nuanced dependent variable than the first model.

⁴⁴ This is the case for 21 of the 142 origin-country dummies.

6.3 Outliers

Outliers are observations that do not follow the pattern of most of the observations. In other words, the predicted value from the model is far from the actual value. This thereby gives these variables large residuals. Alternatively, they will have a particularly unusual value on an independent variable, termed a leverage point. Both these kinds of observations may have a large effect on the estimates produced by OLS, making it important to spot them and control for their effect (Kennedy 2008: 346).

When testing for observations with high leverage in a model without robust standard errors or weights,⁴⁵ I find no such observations.⁴⁶ However, I do find a number of outliers for the standardized residuals of the dyads in the main model.⁴⁷ I therefore estimate this model without the 98 observations that had a displayed value smaller than -2 or greater than 2 (see model A.I in Table A.5 in the appendix) (Menard 2010: 135) There is only a small observed change in the coefficients pertaining to the hypotheses, and all main variables are still significant at the same levels as before. However, the variable for previous asylum seekers now has a significant effect at the 10 percent level. In contrast to the expected effect, the number of previous asylum seekers appears to have a positive impact on recognition rates when the outliers are excluded. While this does imply that the outliers influence the main model, they do not appear to influence the conclusions drawn for the three hypotheses in the study. Also, it is not clear that an effect only present at the 10% level should be given much weight. Either way, the main conclusions appear to be robust toward outliers.

6.4 Multicollinearity

A problem of multicollinearity occurs if two (or more) independent variables are highly correlated with each other. In other words, they tend to change at the same time. This makes it difficult to separate the two variables and correctly assess their individual effect. Technically, this appears as large standard errors for the coefficients on the independent

⁴⁵ I was not able to compute the leverage when using robust standard errors and weights. This measure would obviously be better if it were computed on the main model.

⁴⁶ Using the leverage command in stata. I cut off at observations with a leverage greater than $(2k+2/n)$, where k is the number of independent variables and n is the number of observations (Baltagi 2011: 180)

⁴⁷ These are computed manually, as I could not find a command which would estimate the standardized residual for my main model. I subtracted observed values from predicted values to generate the residuals, before dividing the residuals by their standard deviation.

variables concerned (Skog 2004: 287), which in turn makes it difficult to achieve significant estimates. One way to check for multicollinearity is to calculate the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF), where a score above 10 indicates the presence of multicollinearity. Table 6.1 below shows the variables that have a VIF-score above this threshold. This can indicate a problem of finding significant results for the variables concerned. However, as seen in the main analysis, most of the variables concerned that are linked to a hypothesis show significant results. This includes the interaction terms between the dummy variables for Sweden and Norway, respectively and the persecution/conflict index, which have high VIF-scores. Thus, multicollinearity does not pose a large problem for my analysis. In any case, in order to check whether my main conclusions have been influenced by the presence of multicollinearity, I estimate the main model without the dummy variables for Sweden and Norway (see Table A.6 in the appendix). A VIF-test show that upon the removal of these two control variables, no variables have a VIF-score above 10. The result of the regression excluding the two destination dummies still gives the same results as the main analysis.

Table 6.1. Variables that have a Variance Inflation Factor above 10.

Variable	VIF-score
Sweden	22.49
Norway	17.40
Persecution/Conflict Index*Sweden	15.66
Unemployment rate	15.62
Year14	12.94
Persecution/Conflict Index	12.64
Anti-immigration parties	12.29
Persecution/Conflict Index*Norway	10.7

7 Concluding discussion

In this thesis, I set out to examine the effect of politics on the probability of gaining recognition as an asylum seeker. I end with a discussion of my main findings and their implications for policy and for further research. I dwell on the aspects which are still unknown and which should be studied more closely in order to further understand the discrepancy between the European countries' similar commitments and their actual recognition rates.

7.1 The main findings

This thesis has shown that politics matters for recognition rates. Specifically, rates are higher under left-wing governments than under centre-right governments. While I do not wish to blatantly conclude on the causality of this finding, it is in accordance with partisan theory and the hypothesis I derived from it. The theory claims that parties will enact the policies their voters support and which is in line with their ideology. The preferences of the voters of each of the political blocks are clear in that left-leaning voters have a more favourable position toward immigration and refugees than voters on the centre-right have. In addition, the political ideology of the left, and their history of support for minorities and the disadvantaged, also appears make them favourably inclined towards immigrants. This is in contrast to the centre-right's focus on the individual and the status quo. I have suggested that these preferences and ideologies are reflected in the significant difference in recognition rates between left-leaning and centre-right governments, a finding that proved robust to most changes in the main model.

However, it also appears that there is a limit to the influence of politics on recognition rates, as I find no effect of anti-immigration parties. Through the logic of partisan theory, I suggested that governments might change their policies somewhat as a result of the electoral success of the anti-immigration parties. Qualitative evidence supports such a link in all three countries. Still, it appears that this is not the case for the chance of being recognized as a refugee, though such an effect for other aspects of immigration policies cannot be ruled out.

The existing research on this topic lacks attention to, and a comparison of, the influence of origin-specific factors on the outcome of an asylum application in different countries. My analysis suggests that these factors can account for at least some of the

variation in recognition rates between the Scandinavian countries. While this finding cannot be generalized to the rest of Europe without further study, the analysis points to a connection between asylum policy and the extent to which conditions in the country of origin are important when assessing the merit of each asylum claim. In Denmark, which other researchers have pointed to as having the strictest asylum policy in Scandinavia, much more weight is placed on the conditions in the country of origin of the asylum seeker that may have rendered the person to be in a position where he or she fulfils the criteria in the Refugee Convention. In Sweden and Norway, such conditions are much less influential in determining the likelihood of refugee status. Hence, coming from a country in which conditions are worse means that you have a relatively higher probability of gaining recognition in Denmark than in Norway and Sweden. I do not wish to blatantly conclude on the causality between general asylum policy – which is often mainly concerned with the rights awarded to asylum seekers and refugees and the supplementary status – and the importance of conditions in the country of origin on the outcome of an application. More research is needed in order to determine the universality of this pattern.

In summary, this thesis casts doubts on the statement presented by the Director General of the Norwegian Directorate of Immigration in the beginning of this thesis, as the Scandinavian countries do differ in their evaluation of asylum applications. This is shown by their differing evaluation of conditions in the country of origin. Moreover, the applications are not determined merely by their merit in relation to international conventions, as both the government in power and the unemployment rate have been shown to affect recognition rates.⁴⁸ If these factors are not identical at a given time, recognition rates across the Scandinavian countries will necessarily be different for asylum seekers from the same country.

These results seriously question the asylum procedures in the three countries studied. The findings presented in this thesis, point to a much more arbitrary outcome of asylum applications. This is important, all the time EU-legislation limits the choice asylum seekers have of where to lodge their application. Moreover, in the worst instance, factors outside the control of the asylum seeker, such as a change in government, may cause them to be returned to countries where they are in danger. However, as the analysis does not include the supplementary status, and it is possible, although perhaps not likely, that more are granted

⁴⁸ The variable for previous asylum seekers was not significant in the main analysis, but was significant and positive in some of the robustness tests. I therefore do not conclude on its effect in this section.

such statuses under centre-right governments, for instance, I cannot draw a firm conclusion on this issue. Either way, it is clear that factors that should not affect the outcome of asylum applications, do in fact contribute to it.

7.2 Policy implications

Given that my results are correct and that governments have an interest in ensuring similar recognition rates, there are some areas they should focus their efforts on. The most promising tool in such a task appears to be the cooperation through the European Union, particularly through the recently established European Union Asylum Support Office (EASO) in Malta. The office is aware of the discrepancies in recognition rates and has placed emphasis on ensuring their increasing correspondence. In particular, the office has launched a portal where the EU member states and associated countries' centres for country of origin information may upload and read information compiled by other such centres.⁴⁹ This allows the different countries of destination to read and evaluate other European countries' assessment of conditions in the countries of origin for asylum seekers. Hopefully, a furthering of such cooperation may help country of origin information to be both similar and to prevent the extent of differing emphasis placed on such conditions in Scandinavian countries today.

This is only one example of cooperation placed at the EU level that may help decrease the difference in recognition rates. Another example is the recent effort to change the current asylum procedures directive, which will result in more uniform asylum procedures. This is done in order to ensure that whether or not an asylum seeker is granted protection does not depend on where he or she decides to lodge the application (European Parliament 2013). Cooperation and transparency at this level seems to be the most promising tool for the recognition rates discrepancies, albeit caution must be made to avoid a "race to the bottom", where the standard of the countries with the lowest recognition rates and rights for migrants are used as a basis for new EU legislation.

An alternative is cooperation between the Scandinavian countries on these issues. However, such regional cooperation may only cause asylum procedures to differ amongst European regions instead of countries, which would not contribute to an overall fairer and more uniform asylum system in Europe.

⁴⁹ See <http://easo.europa.eu/support-expertise/country-of-origin/>

7.3 Further research

There is still a relatively small amount of research on what determines the outcome of asylum applications, and so there are many possible topics and paths future research can take. Throughout this thesis, I have pointed to some such topics that should be investigated more carefully. I will here focus on the two that I consider most important, and which has a connection to this thesis.

First, future research should attempt to explore the causal links between politics and recognition rates. While I show a connection between the parties in government and a difference in the origin-specific recognition rates, I cannot determine specifically *how* these are causality related. Partisan theory suggests that voters affect the opinions of the party they vote for. However, in the case of recognition rates, it is more difficult to assess how politicians affect and change their policy. As mentioned in Section 3.2, politicians are likely to do so in two ways: they may assess the conditions in countries with certain characteristics differently, or they may direct the interpretation of the law in a more liberal or restrictive direction in general. It is beyond the scope of this thesis to investigate the causal links more carefully. Quantitative studies such as mine are often better at estimating the causal effect than they are at observing the causal mechanism. This implies that I may estimate the size of the effect and the precision of the estimate, but it is much more difficult to find a causal pathway from political parties to recognition rates. Usually, qualitative studies are better at determining such causal mechanisms (Gerring 2007: 43-44).

A study of the effect politicians and the government have on the interpretation of such central human rights conventions as the Refugee Convention, will certainly be interesting and further increase our understanding of the mechanisms asylum seekers are subject to. This could be done as a case study of one country or as a comparison between countries, such as those of Scandinavian. A qualitative comparison of how the cases of asylum seekers from the same country are handled in a few countries of destination could further shed light on reasons for the differences in recognition rates, at least for a few countries of origin.

Second, there has been too little research on why recognition rates are different between destination countries. This is surprising as the interest of many researchers has been to explain why they differ to such a large extent. Such differences may account for much of the variation in recognition rates. While politics can affect the outcome of applications in one country, it may not do so in another. The comparative finding in this thesis, that countries emphasise conditions in the country of origin different, should be investigated further in my

opinion. A study which had access to origin-specific recognition rates for more countries would be well advised to investigate this connection, as it appears that it may count for much of the variation between countries.

Appendix

Table A.1. List of political parties in Scandinavia sorted by the traditional left-right axis.

Country	Parties	Block
Denmark	Socialist People's Party, Unity List, the Social Democrats, the Radical Liberal Party, Centre Democrats (dissolved 2008).	Left-leaning
	The Liberal Party, the Conservative People's Party, Danish People's Party.	Centre/right
Norway	Socialist People's Party, the Labour Part, the Centre Party (from the 2005 election onwards).	Left-leaning
	The Liberal Party, the Christian Democrats, the Centre Party (prior to the 2005 election), the Conservative Party, the Progress Party.	Centre/right
Sweden	The Social Democratic Party, the Green Party, the Left Party.	Left-leaning
	The Moderate Party, the Centre Party, the Liberal People's Party, the Christian Democrats, the Swedish Democrats.	Centre/right

Table A.2. Descriptive statistics

Variable	Observations	Mean	Standard		
			Deviation	Min	Max
Recognition Rates	3667	0.056	0.152	0	1
Anti-immigration parties	3667	0.072	0.062	0.0057	0.221
Persecution/Conflict Index	3594	1.235	0.918	0	4.767
Unemployment rate	3667	0.052	0.023	0.017	0.103
Previous asylum seekers	3667	2.105	1.110	0.392	4.952

Table A.3. List of countries for which I have replaced missing values on the independent variables

Country	Years replaced	Variable
Bosnia-Hercegovina	1995-1999	Polity
Tunisia	2011	Polity
Iraq	2002-2009	Polity
Lebanon	2000-2004	Polity
Afghanistan	2001-2004	Polity
Pakistan	1997-1998	Ethnic war
Montenegro	2006	Political Terror Scale
Slovenia	1996	Political Terror Scale

Table A.4. OLS-regression on recognition rates. Influence of potentially biased variables.

	Model A.I	Model A.II	Model A.III
Sweden 2000-2007	-0.0231 (-0.77)		
Left-wing governments	0.0479** (2.25)	0.0319 (0.70)	0.0209 (0.47)
Anti-Immigration parties	0.469 (1.60)	-0.877 (-0.90)	-1.199 (-1.36)
Persecution/Conflict Index	0.100*** (2.71)	0.115*** (3.13)	0.117*** (2.97)
Persecution/Conflict Index*Norway	-0.0776** (-2.04)	-0.0948** (-2.46)	-0.0691 (-1.81)
Persecution/Conflict Index*Sweden	-0.0887*** (-2.80)		
Norway	-0.0203 (-0.30)	0.0377 (0.34)	0.0230 (0.22)
Sweden	0.0945 (1.45)		
Previous asylum seekers	0.0313 (1.55)	0.0411** (2.29)	0.0420*** (3.05)
Unemployment rate	-2.748* (-1.87)	-3.500 (-1.07)	-2.541 (-0.88)
Origin country fixed effects	Yes	No	Yes
Time fixed effects	Yes	Yes	Yes
Asylum seeker weights	Yes	Yes	Yes
Constant	0.0261 (0.34)	0.0153 (0.08)	0.00123 (0.02)
N	3585	1797	1797

t statistics in parentheses. Estimated with robust standard errors, clustered by country of origin.

Model I includes a dummy variable for Sweden for the time period 2000-2007. Model II and III is only estimated on observations for Norway and Denmark.

* p<0.01, ** p<0.05, *** p<0.01, **** p<0.001

Table A.5. OLS (model A.I) and logistic regression (models A.II and A.III) on recognition rates.

	Model A.I	Model A.II	Model A.III
Left-wing governments	0.0430** (2.05)	1.868*** (3.13)	0.900*** (2.61)
Anti-Immigration parties	0.533 (1.64)	-30.53*** (-3.88)	-1.889 (-0.25)
Persecution/Conflict Index	0.104*** (2.84)	0.136 (0.20)	0.632* (1.76)
Persecution/Conflict Index*Norway	-0.0808** (-2.17)	0.0956 (0.16)	-0.766** (-2.12)
Persecution/Conflict Index*Sweden	-0.0919*** (-2.98)	0.136 (0.22)	-1.018*** (-2.98)
Norway	-0.0112 (-0.17)	0.968 (1.02)	-0.0269 (-0.03)
Sweden	0.0930 (1.66)	-4.460** (-2.54)	-0.339 (-0.28)
Previous asylum seekers	0.0338* (1.74)	1.325*** (3.07)	1.017**** (3.52)
Unemployment rate	-2.511* (-1.93)	43.25* (1.74)	2.114 (0.12)
Origin country fixed effects	Yes	No	Yes
Time fixed effects	Yes	Yes	Yes
Asylum seeker weights	Yes	Yes	Yes
Constant	-0.0111 (-0.14)	-4.098 (-1.48)	3.318** (2.31) 7.094**** (4.64)
N	3486	3585	3585

t statistics in parentheses. Estimated with robust standard errors, clustered by country of origin.

Model I is estimated without outliers, defined as those who have standardized residuals smaller than -2 or larger than 2. Model II is estimated with a dichotomous dependent variable. 1 = more than a rate of zero recognized as refugees. Model III is estimates as an ordered logit model. 0 = recognition rates of zero. 1 = Above zero, below 0.1. 2 = Above 0.1 up until 1.

* p<0.01, ** p<0.05, *** p<0.01, **** p<0.001

Table A.6. OLS-regression on recognition rates without destination country dummies.

	Model A.I
Left-wing governments	0.0605*** (2.77)
Anti-Immigration parties	0.0602 (0.47)
Persecution/Conflict Index	0.0894** (2.52)
Persecution/Conflict Index*Norway	-0.0690** (-2.16)
Persecution/Conflict Index*Sweden	-0.0735*** (-2.70)
Sweden	
Norway	
Previous asylum seekers	0.0414** (2.09)
Unemployment rate	-1.964** (-2.08)
Origin country fixed effects	Yes
Time fixed effects	Yes
Asylum seeker weights	Yes
Constant	-0.0178 (-0.21)
N	3585

t statistics in parentheses. Estimated with robust standard errors, clustered by country of origin.

Model I includes is estimated without dummy variables for Sweden and Norway.

* p<0.01, ** p<0.05, *** p<0.01, **** p<0.001

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